NEW YORK POST

Page Six®

TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026 / Mostly sunny, hot, 93° / Weather: P. 20 ★★ LATE CITY FINAL nypost.com $2.00

AP, Getty Images

STRAIT FLU$H

- **Trump reimposes blockade, touts 20% toll on Hormuz cargo**
- **US will be 'guardian angel' of waterway, prez says after strikes**

President Trump declared yesterday that the US will be "taking over" the Strait of Hormuz and reinstate the naval blockade while applying a 20 percent reimbursement fee for the cost of escorting cargo through the waterway. "We'll become the guardian of the strait," the president said.

PAGES 4-5

Exhibit symptoms

KENA BETANCOUR/EPA/Shutterstock

BE CAREFUL: Art lovers line up at the Guggenheim, one of 31 city buildings found to contain the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease.

Legionnaires' spread hits museum, UWS

By NICOLE ROSENTHAL
and GREG CARLTON

The Legionnaires' disease outbreak on the Upper East Side has now sickened 60 people — with the dangerous bacteria also found for the first time across the park, in a posh Upper West Side building.

The majority of the people sickened — 49 victims — have had to be hospitalized for the potentially deadly disease's severe form of pneumonia, according to the city Department of Health.

The latest count of those stricken in the city is up from 46 on Saturday, with 22 needing to enter a hospital for treatment, officials said.

As of Monday night, 15 people are still hospitalized, and 34 people have been discharged, per the DOH.

No deaths have been reported in the latest local outbreak — which even ensnared the Guggenheim Museum — but more people are expected to test positive in the coming days, officials said.

All of the victims have been on the Upper East Side. But the hot-water system at The Ardsley at 320 Central Park West — where one-bedrooms rent for close to $1 million — just tested positive for Legionella bacteria, which causes the disease, officials said.

The Upper West Side building has since disinfected its system, according to the West Side Rag.

Mayor Mamdani said at an unrelated press conference Monday the positive test at The Ardsley should not be a cause for concern.

"There is no cooling tower of this building on the Upper West Side," he said. "And the reason for that focus is typically those towers are the cause of this outbreak."

The latest outbreak is being investigated as a "community cluster" affecting the Upper East Side neighborhoods of Carnegie Hill and Yorkville. The outbreak was first reported July 2.

Sources of trouble

When there are multiple people sickened with Legionnaires' disease in a given neighborhood, common sources of exposure include cooling towers, hot tubs and spray fountains, the city said.

Testing of the city's roughly 183 cooling towers in the affected area was completed last week, and 31 buildings — including the Guggenheim — were found to have the bacteria that causes Legionnaires' disease. All 31 buildings confirmed they completed the cleaning and disinfection of their cooling towers, a Health Department rep said.

More than half of the neighborhood's cooling towers had been dinged by health officials for issues during their latest inspections — including some that failed to perform regular monitoring and cleaning and did not submit Legionella test results to the Health Department as required by law, records reviewed by The Post show.

The city has issued a blanket warning to anyone who lives, works or has visited the infected area since late June to immediately contact a healthcare provider upon developing flu-like symptoms.

'Funding' reasons for hope

Republican Bruce Blakeman has raised $11 million in his campaign for governor — enough for a competitive race against Gov. Hochul, his campaign said.

"Hochul may have the office, but we have the unstoppable force of New Yorkers fed up with a state they can no longer afford," Blakeman for New York finance chair Howard Fensterman told The Post.

"We knew from day one that running an underdog campaign meant running against the full force of the governor's mansion — an office that went so far as to try to illegally block our campaign funding," he said.

"Yet, Blakeman for New York has raised nearly $11 million from over 10,000 supporters and will unlock an additional $1.5 million in funding that Hochul unsuccessfully tried to block us from." *Carl Campanile*

Running mate 'Kat' in the act

Gov. Hochul's running mate was dinged by election officials for allegedly misusing campaign funds on travel to the 2024 Democratic National Convention, The Post has learned.

Former City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, who is now running for lieutenant governor, was hit with a $3,585 penalty last week by the city Campaign Finance Board.

CFB officials found Adams violated campaign finance laws by reimbursing herself for travel to the convention, which took place in Chicago from Aug. 19-22.

Vaughn Golden

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LOTTERY

NEW YORK
■ Midday Nos. Mon.: **747**
■ Midday Win-4 Mon.: **1146**
■ Midday Take-5 Mon.: **4, 5, 17, 31, 36**
■ Evening Nos. Mon.: **580**
■ Evening Win-4 Mon.: **8259**
■ Evening Take-5 Mon.: **2, 6, 7, 18, 26**
■ Pick-10 Mon.: **7, 8, 11, 13, 27, 37, 39, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, 53, 59, 66, 70, 71, 74, 77, 78**
■ Millionaire for Life Mon.: **19, 36, 38, 43, 48;** MB: **3**
■ Powerball Mon.: **5, 25, 36, 40, 48;** PB: **3;** PP: **x2;** DP: **1, 17, 31, 39, 43;** PB: 22

NEW JERSEY
■ Pick-3 Mon.: **434;** Fireball: **4**
■ Pick-4 Mon.: **9136;** Fireball: **4**
■ Cash-5 Xtra Mon.: **2, 11, 13, 14, 29;** Xtra: **2**
■ Pick-6 Mon.: **1, 12, 13, 21, 30, 42;** DP: **2, 5, 6, 32, 39, 42**

CONNECTICUT
■ Play-3 Mon.: **316;** Wild: **2**
■ Play-4 Mon.: **2179;** Wild: **5**
■ Cash-5 Mon.: **2, 5, 7, 12, 25**

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Whooza living the high life now!

Travis Kelce and the new pooch he shares with wife Taylor Swift arrive by jet in Palm Beach. Fla., over the weekend. The NFLer and pop star married on July 3 and were spotted last week at a California wedding (inset).

MiamiPIXX / BACKGRID; BACKGRID

'ANTI' SOCIAL MEDIA

US kid-ban poll

By RONNY REYES

A majority of adults in the US support banning social media for kids under the age of 16, according to a new survey.

A Pew Research Center poll of nearly 10,000 adults across the US found that 56% support banning minors from using social-media sites until they turn 16.

The vast majority of Americans also supported policies to enforce parental consent, age verification and time limits on minors' access to social media, according to the survey.

Of the 9,750 adults surveyed between May 26 and June 1, only 21% opposed a social media ban for those under 16, with 23% of respondents saying they weren't sure of their opinion on the topic.

Overwhelming support for the ban was seen across adults of all ages and regardless of whether the respondent was a parent to a child below the age of 16 — although parents of young kids were more in favor.

Other measures

Support for the ban also crossed political demographics, with the majority of both Democratic and Republican respondents voting in favor of it.

Even more Americans support less drastic measures than a full-out ban.

The survey found that 85% said they support parental consent for minors to create social-media accounts, 78% support age verification on the platforms and another 78% support time limits for minors.

In the United States, several states have tried to create stricter guidelines around teen social-media use, including a resolution last year to require age verification for social media in Louisiana.

The law, which would have required age verification for users under 16, was struck down by a judge last December.

Fight across US

A similar bill was put forth in Texas to ban social-media platforms for anyone under 18, but the proposal failed in the state's Senate.

California is the latest state to make the push with a bipartisan bill, AB-1709, requiring large social-media companies to come up with an alternative, less addictive service for underage users.

The proposal would effectively yank minors under 16 off platforms unless the companies overhaul how their apps work.

Such bans have already rolled out elsewhere in the world, including the UK, where Parliament announced a pilot program of social-media bans, curfews and app time limits in March.

Social media has a significant impact on youths' mental health and well-being, according to experts.

"About 95% of youth are estimated to be on social media," child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr. Jesse Hinckley said, noting that one study found "that around three hours or more of social-media exposure a day doubles the risk of having some sort of mental-health problem."

rreyes@nypost.com

100° baked Apple this week

Another potentially deadly heat wave will envelop the Northeast this week, with temperatures feeling like 100 degrees — though it'll feel less intense than the one that baked the area earlier this month.

Big Apple temperatures will peak Wednesday at 96 degrees, although the feel-like temperature will top 100 degrees.

Mercury will spike at 92 on Thursday.

Parts of the Jersey Shore will reach feels-like temperatures of 107 Wednesday, according to AccuWeather.

"It's a close call as to whether Central Park will hit 100 on Wednesday. Some of the New Jersey suburbs that tend to run a little bit hotter, such as Newark, will probably hit 100 on Wednesday," said John Feerick, senior meteorologist at AccuWeather.

"Philadelphia probably hits the century mark as well. Central Park will be a closer call, but certainly in the realm of possibility."

At least three New York residents died from heat during the recent scorcher in the first week of July.

New York City has experienced nine 90-plus days so far this summer, with an average summer in the city enduring 15 days above that figure.

Anthony Blair

Ex-IRGC general's big Trump threat

A former top Iranian commander has chillingly boasted that his country could assassinate President Trump even inside the White House.

"If the goal is to assassinate Trump, the Islamic Republic can easily do so in the White House. Whenever necessary, we are capable of doing that," claimed Hossein Kanani Moghaddam, a former senior commander in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, to the Iranian news website Fararu.

The general meanwhile asserted that his country is not aiming for peace from the current US-Iran talks — and refused to rule out "revenge" against America for the war.

"We are not negotiating with the Americans for peace. We are negotiating to reduce tensions," Moghaddam said, adding that Iran's talks with Washington are intended to strengthen the Islamic Republic's demands.

"We are not negotiating for peace with Trump and his criminal aides. In the negotiations, we are only seeking to restore our rights and clarify the accusations made against us by the United States," he said.

"As for revenge and retaliation, they remain firmly on the table," Moghaddam added.

The former military leader's comments come as US strikes on Iran intensified over the weekend.

For its part, Iran has accused the US of undermining talks with Oman aimed at ensuring safe passage through the strait.

Iran claimed the US is increasing the risk of broader conflict, condemning its "repeated provocations and destabilizing actions," military spokesman Ebrahim Zolfaghari said.

"The leaders of the countries in the region are warned that any cooperation with the United States or logistical support for its military will be regarded as an act of war against Iran's sovereignty and national security," he added. *Anthony Blair with Wires*

Houthi return strike

PAY YOUR WAY

US will charge toll as strait 'guardian angel', prez says

By JOSH CHRISTENSON, STEVEN NELSON and RYAN KING

WASHINGTON — President Trump on Monday declared the US the "guardian" of the Strait of Hormuz — unveiling a new toll on all ships transiting the Persian Gulf that could be a windfall for the US.

Trump launched a blockade of Iranian ports and ordered another night of airstrikes Monday as industry experts estimated America's angel wings in the strait could be worth up to $200 billion, but it's unclear how — or whether — the tolls can be imposed.

On social media and beyond, Trump said the US will now likely "run" the strait and expect reimbursement for ensuring commercial ships no longer get fired upon by Iran.

"The U.S.A. will be, from this point forward, known as 'THE GUARDIAN OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT,' but as such, and as a matter of FAIRNESS, will be reimbursed, at the rate of 20% on all cargo shipped, for any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security," Trump wrote on Trump Social.

"The process and formation will begin immediately."

But an exact timeline for the toll program roll-out is also unclear.

'They're very foolish'

The restoration of the naval blockade and the tolling proposal is Trump's latest gambit to increase pressure on the Islamic Republic and allies alike following the collapse of the less-than-month-old peace deal with Tehran.

"And I think in the end we will end up just controlling the whole thing, and what they're doing is being very foolish, very stupid, and they've treated people horribly," Trump said Monday of Iran's failure to abide by June's memorandum of understanding that called for reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

US Central Command said the naval blockade resumed at 4 p.m. EDT Monday but provided no information on the timing of the planned tolls, including whether any US-allied nations would be exempt.

Trump vowed to continue bombing — after resuming his offensive last Wednesday — in retribution for Iranian attacks on three ships for using a route along the Omani coast rather than Iran's preferred sea lane.

Central Command said Monday evening that a third consec-

Ex-prez in detention after plot

Former Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been placed under house arrest by the country's notorious Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps following a failed Israeli plot to install him in place of the current theocratic regime, according to a stunning new report.

The New York Times, citing four Iranian officials, reported Monday that the 69-year-old is being held by the IRGC's intelligence wing after he left a safe house run by Israel's Mossad.

Before last week, Ahmadinejad had not been seen in public since an Israeli airstrike hit his compound in the early hours of Operation Epic Fury Feb. 28, after which he was spirited away to the safe house, the Times reported, citing US and Iranian officials.

The former president, who ran Iran with an iron fist from 2005 to 2013, re-emerged last week during funeral ceremonies for the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed on the same day as the strike on Ahmadinejad's compound.

Ahmadinejad increasingly clashed with the Islamic Republic's rulers, having been blocked from seeking his old job in 2017, 2021 and 2024.

Samuel Chamberlain

THE BATTLE FOR IRAN

The Iran-backed Houthi rebel group fired a ballistic missile at Saudi Arabia after accusing the kingdom of orchestrating airstrikes at its airport — with the terror group also raising suspicion around a key Red Sea trade route.

A Saudi coalition spokesman confirmed the kingdom's air defenses intercepted a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis following airstrikes at the Sanaa International Airport earlier on Monday.

The Houthis described the attack in Sanaa as an act of "blatant aggression" that threatened to rip apart the years-long truce it has with Yemen's Saudi-backed, internationally recognized government.

"This aggression will not go unanswered or unpunished," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree said, vowing that Saudi Arabia would be the one to bear the consequences.

Tensions flared early Monday when an Iranian plane attempted to land at the airport, with Yemen's forces firing at the runway to try and prevent its arrival. The plane, allegedly carrying a delegation that attended Khamenei's funeral last week, was forced to land at the Houthi-controlled Hodeidah International Airport.

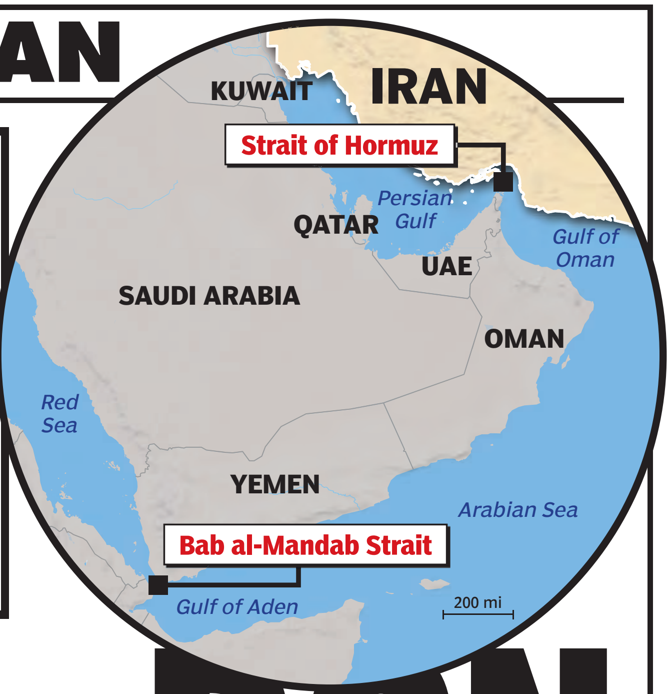
Yemen's Saudi-backed government accused the Iranian flight of infiltrating the country's airspace.

"At this moment, we say that our patience has run out," said Gen. Taher al-Aqili, Yemen's defense minister.

As tensions flared, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations warned of suspicious activity off the coast of Yemen on Monday. At least six small boats approached a tanker sailing in the Gulf of Aden.

The ship was forced to fire warning shots as the boats continued to trail the vessel, per the UKMTO.

The incident elevated fears the Houthis could threaten the Bab al-Mandeb Strait that connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. *Ronny Reyes, Wires*



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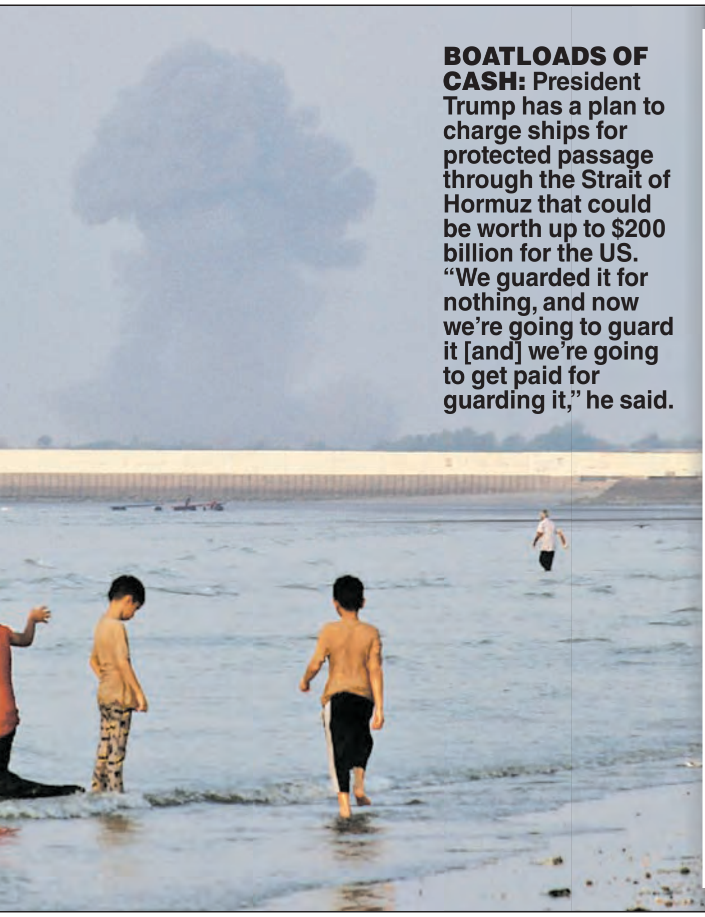


BOATLOADS OF CASH: President Trump has a plan to charge ships for protected passage through the Strait of Hormuz that could be worth up to $200 billion for the US. "We guarded it for nothing, and now we're going to guard it [and] we're going to get paid for guarding it," he said.

utive night of attacks had begun and would "continue imposing a heavy cost on Iranian forces and degrade their ability to attack innocent civilians and commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz."

Trump told radio host Hugh Hewitt in a Monday afternoon interview that more attacks could be coming on Tuesday. "And there's not a damn thing they can do about it," he said.

"To them, deals are made to be broken. They are extremely unreliable people," Trump said.

"We'll become the guardian of the strait. Maybe we'll call it the guardian angel of the strait, and we should be reimbursed for that . . . We guarded it for nothing, and now we're going to guard it [and] we're going to get paid for guarding it," Trump added on "Fox & Friends" Monday.

The Pentagon said American strikes over the weekend hit dozens of Iranian targets, including missile and drone capabilities as well as small boats, coastal radar sites and air-defense systems.

Brent crude oil prices rose roughly 5% to around $80 per barrel on Monday in the wake of the strikes and tensions in the waterway, through which one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil passes. Tehran struck at US allies in the Persian Gulf, including some of Kuwait's offshore energy infrastructure, according to the Athens-based Xclusiv Shipbrokers.

A US naval blockade had been imposed earlier in the conflict but withdrawn ahead of the signing of a 14-point memorandum of understanding with Iran in mid-June, which Trump has declared "over."

No 'mechanism' yet

Trump's surprise levy on international shipping through the strait would rake in vast sums of money if imposed — with an industry expert projecting a windfall of nearly $200 billion if traffic returns to prewar levels.

Brandon Daniels, CEO of supply chain AI company Exiger, said the annual volume of commerce in the strait was between $880 billion and $970 billion before the war.

That would translate into Trump tolls of between $176 billion and $194 billion — an amount that would, if enacted, cover the compensation for about 1 million or more federal civilian workers.

"I don't think that there is a real mechanism for us to charge that toll at this moment, and how we would charge that toll is still an open question of both economic policy and international law," Daniels said.

The Persian Gulf is a crucial source of global energy, and Daniels' supply-chain data suggests about $600 billion in annual shipments of crude oil and between $80 billion and $120 billion annually in liquefied natural gas.

Roughly $200-$250 billion in additional annual trade transit the bottleneck, including fertilizer, helium and hardened polymers.

Hip nabe overrun by filthy rodents

Oh, cheese! Rats invade East Village

Non-Fungible

TAIL OF 2 CITIES: Most of New York City has seen a drop in rat sightings, but the East Village has experienced a 37.6% surge year over year. It's a "[big] problem," according to resident Ahan Shah, 26 (left).

Kevin C Downs

By NICOLE ROSENTHAL,
FENIX SURIEL,
DAVID DETURRIS
and XAVIER SERRANO

Rat-a-fooey!

Manhattan's East Village is experiencing a rodent resurgence with a whopping 37.6% increase in rat sightings year over year — even as reports fell dramatically citywide this year, according to Big Apple public records.

Community Board 3 in Manhattan — comprised of the East Village, the Lower East Side, Two Bridges and swaths of Chinatown — saw the critters surging despite significant investments in trash containerization and other anti-pest measures.

The area generated 300 complaints from Jan. 1 to July 11 this year — up from 218 over the same period last year while most other districts saw a steep decline in rodent activity, according to a Post review of city 311 complaint data.

Citywide sightings dropped from 12,017 to 9,023 over the same stretch, the data shows.

"When I first moved in, I would definitely say they were the biggest problem," said East Village resident Ahan Shah, 26, adding the rats are "especially a problem at night."

"I'll walk in the middle of the street," chimed in 23-year-old local Nico, "because I'm scared they'll run by me."

"I get scared," said 20-year-old Elijah Orellana, who works as a porter at an apartment building on Canal Street in Chinatown. "They're all near the garbage bins and where all the trash bags are."

Sanitation department spokesman Vincent Gragnani told The Post the dramatic data can be attributed to just three problem areas in the district: Second Avenue between East Seventh Street and St. Mark's Place; East Fifth Street between Cooper Square and Second Avenue; and Broome Street between Ludlow and Orchard streets.

Garbage piled up

The latter saw an increase in rat reports by 400% compared to 2025 figures, the department said, adding that a handful of problem addresses on East Fifth Street and Broome Street account for the increase — and "potentially reflect issues inside the individual buildings."

Unlike some other parts of Manhattan, the East Village is still littered with piles of black garbage bags tossed onto the street for curbside pickup — a practice that sanitation officials have been pushing to nix in order to curb rats.

The majority of rat-related calls in the district were made at addresses with more than 10 units — which are exempt for now from DSNY requirements mandating the use of new anti-rat garbage bins.

$1B NYS COV fraud dragnet

The Trump administration deployed a federal strike team to New York Monday as part of a crackdown on fraudsters who took nearly $1 billion in unemployment benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic, The Post has learned.

The Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, which unearthed the stunning fraud, is participating in the joint strike force headed to New York, where up to $2 million per day is currently being bilked by fraudsters instead of going to unemployment insurance, administration officials said.

"New York is stealing from the American people every single day — draining their hard-earned tax dollars through rampant unemployment insurance fraud and improper payments," said Inspector General Anthony D'Esposito.

"In partnership with Acting Secretary Keith Sonderling, we are taking a tough-on-crime approach to dismantle this fraud, hunt down every stolen dollar, and prosecute those responsible."

Sonderling had already sent letters highlighting the fraud to New York Gov. Hochul as well as other states' governors. *Josh Christenson*

Hamas is blocking aid: UN

A United Nations official has said Palestinian militant group Hamas was disrupting aid distribution in the Gaza Strip, placing further hardship on its civilians already grappling with the humanitarian crisis in the war-shattered enclave.

In a statement late on Sunday, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories said humanitarian workers had to halt activity on Saturday after armed men entered a food distribution point in northern Gaza and assaulted two truck drivers in a World Food Program warehouse.

"These incidents are not isolated. They are completely unacceptable and reflect an increasingly dangerous pattern of intimidation, violence and obstruction, including smuggling attempts, targeting and abusing humanitarian operations," said UN Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Ramiz Alakbarov.

"They are placing humanitarian workers at risk, disrupting the delivery of lifesaving assistance, and further constraining the ability of humanitarian organizations to operate" at a time of severe suffering.

Hamas on Monday denied the allegations. *Reuters*

Wrong-way driver 'stash'

The wrong-way Mercedes driver who nearly plowed into an NYPD detective in a wild caught-on-video crash kept a stash of heroin in a fanny pack in the car, officials said.

Juan Tenorio Ramos, 24, drove his white Mercedes in Carroll Gardens around 8:25 a.m. Sunday, barely missing the detective before he T-boned a blue Audi, police said.

The Audi then slammed into the Garden Gourmet Deli and Grill, video shows.

Ramos, arrested at the scene, had a fanny pack holding heroin, MDMA and LSD, according to the complaint. *Amanda Woods*

ROGUE RODENT
Alert issued upstate.

Rabid beavers feared

A beaver “out for blood” attacked two swimmers at a quaint upstate vacation spot, prompting officials to issue a warning about rabid rodents in the area.

Brandon Shortsleeve told WPTZ that he and his friend were bitten by a beaver July 4 while out for a swim on Turtle Island, a small isle on the west coast of Lake George.

“The first time my friend ended up picking it up, it swam back at him, so we were like, ‘OK, it’s just out for blood,’ ” Shortsleeve told the outlet.

Shortsleeve and his pal’s run-in with the rowdy rodent is cause for concern, officials said. The attack was investigated by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, which discovered a dead beaver with rabies five days later, officials told WTEN.

Officials warn the public to take precautions and report any beavers demonstrating unusual behavior.

David DeTurris

Rotting body on SI

A man’s rotting body was found inside a Staten Island home Thursday when cops were summoned to the scene for a foul odor, cops and sources said.

The unidentified man was discovered just after noon “significantly decomposed” inside a multifamily home on Housman Avenue near Richmond Terrace in Mariners Harbor, according to police and law-enforcement sources.

He was pronounced dead at the scene, police said.

Amanda Woods

HOME RUNAWAY

Rich drive soaring prices

Adobe

JUST BEACHY: Homes in the Hamptons — like these beachfront properties — now average $4.5 million, with demand driven by Wall Street bonuses.

By MARY K. JACOB

The median US home price is now higher than at any point in the nation’s history, and the people buying homes increasingly aren’t the people who need them the most.

That median climbed to $408,776 in June, a 2.2% jump from a year earlier, according to data from Redfin. But behind the milestone is a housing market being reshaped by the ultra-wealthy, leaving ordinary buyers farther from ownership than at any time in recent memory.

Nowhere is that split more visible than in the Hamptons, where the average home now runs $4.5 million, a 34% surge from last year, according to a review by appraiser Jonathan Miller.

Wall Street bonuses, which hit a record average of nearly $247,000 per employee as bank profits jumped more than 30% last year, are increasingly bankrolling those purchases outright, with buyers leaning on stock portfolios and payouts instead of mortgages to close deals.

More than asking

Miller’s review noted that the elevated share of bidding wars and tighter marketing times point to a market driven by serious high-end buyers rather than speculation, and homes selling above $5 million made up the largest share on record last quarter.

The sharpest price gains outside of New York came from San Francisco and West Palm Beach, Fla.

Bay Area home values soared 9.2%, the biggest jump of any major metro, as tech fortunes from the artificial intelligence boom flooded into real estate.

In South Florida, prices rose 8.6% as billionaires, executives and other ultra-wealthy Americans kept relocating for the sunshine, the beaches and, of course, the favorable tax treatment.

Sales in both cities jumped by roughly 23% from a year earlier, the largest increases of any metro area tracked in the Redfin report.

The math simply doesn’t work in most buyers’ favor right now. Homes are being snapped up fast nationally, with more than 1 in 5 selling above their original asking price in June, the highest share in over a year.

On Long Island, that dynamic is even more extreme, with more than half of homes sold last quarter going above ask.

Mortgage rates hovering close to 6.5% are tacking on hundreds of dollars to the average monthly payment, while sellers, sensing they have the upper hand, are pulling back, too, with new listings sinking to their lowest point since December.

Redfin’s head of economics research, Chen Zhao, said the pool of buyers able to compete has narrowed sharply.

“There’s a pool of higher-income buyers who are purchasing seven-figure homes, but a lot of first-time and average move-up buyers are priced out as mortgage rates stay near 6.5%, making monthly payments challenging,” she said.

Manhattan 1BRs through the roof at over $5K

The city’s housing crisis has hit “DefCon 1,” with average rents for a one-bedroom in Manhattan hitting an all-time high of nearly $5,500 last month, and Brooklyn following suit, according to data and critics.

“We need bold action. This is a crisis,” City Comptroller Mark Levine posted on X over the weekend, along with a link to the latest figures from the Inhabit blog by real-estate giant Corcoran Group.

The dismal June stats reveal that renters paid an average of $5,408 for a one-bedroom in Manhattan, with studio prices not far behind, at $4,014.

In Brooklyn, the average one-bedroom cost renters $4,297 a month.

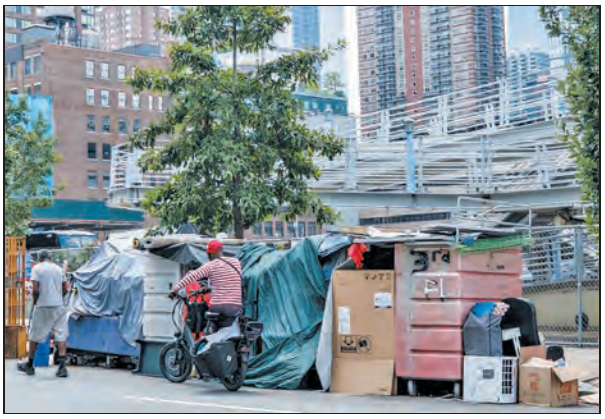
As for the overall median rent for an apartment in Manhattan, it hit $5,295 last month, while those in Brooklyn shelled out a median $4,350 a month, or a roughly 8% increase for both boroughs year-over-year, according to the data.

Both of the figures were record highs.

“NYC’s housing affordability crisis is at DefCon 1,” Levine posted, referring to the US military’s highest level of alert. “We need to push harder on every front to address our housing shortage.”

Greg Carlton

Hizz got no answer for campsite



Stephen Yang for NY Post

STATUS QUO: The 12-block-long homeless encampment near the USS Intrepid Museum remains the same.

Says he'll 'look into it'

By JORDAN DONEGAN and JORGE FITZ-GIBBON

Mayor Mamdani shrugged off complaints about a 12-block-long homeless encampment near the popular Intrepid Museum — telling reporters on Monday he'll "look into it."

Meanwhile, it was business as usual along the putrid row of tents and shelters that have turned a stretch of Manhattan's West Side into a lawless shantytown that has locals calling for City Hall to act.

"I don't think he's done anything," Hudson Yards mom Diana Khabbaz told The Post Monday. "I think it's still the same. There might even be more people right now on the street.

"You see people walking around half naked in the street," she said. "They are smoking whatever they're smoking. You see needles on the street every 20 feet."

One staffer at the floating USS Intrepid Museum claimed "these people have been here forever."

The Post blew the whistle on the gritty encampment on Friday, and followed up Sunday to find that the unsightly shantytown had grown to 12 city blocks, with open-air drug use and prostitution, as well as stolen merchandise on display for all to see.

Frustrated NYPD cops patrol the area but are handcuffed by Mamdani's decree that took the authority to address the homeless issue from police and turned it over to do-nothing city homeless services.

"The NYPD has not been given the green light to clean this encampment up, but we are ready to do so," an NYPD spokesperson said.

Mamdani was asked about the West Side nightmare at an unrelated press conference in Brooklyn Monday, but offered no answers to the complaints.

"We are focused on connecting New Yorkers to shelter and on establishing a pipeline to stable housing, not just moving New Yorkers from one place to another place," he said. "We're going to look into the details of that."

Zo econ policy risks RUNNING 'EM OUT OF TOWN

By CARL CAMPANILE, VAUGHN GOLDEN, CRAIG McCARTHY and MATT TROUTMAN

Lacks the rich.

New York's share of US millionaires dramatically declined in recent years, causing a nearly $11 billion loss in much-needed tax revenue in just one year, according to a bombshell new analysis.

The study released Monday by the Citizens Budget Commission comes amid fears that socialist Mayor Mamdani's push to "tax the rich" will drive even more wealthy taxpayers and their businesses out of New York City.

Even before Mamdani took office, the Empire State's share of the nation's millionaires dipped from 12.7% to 8.7% between 2010 and 2022 — the largest decline of any state, according to the CBC's Competitive NYS: Value Proposition Tracker dashboard.

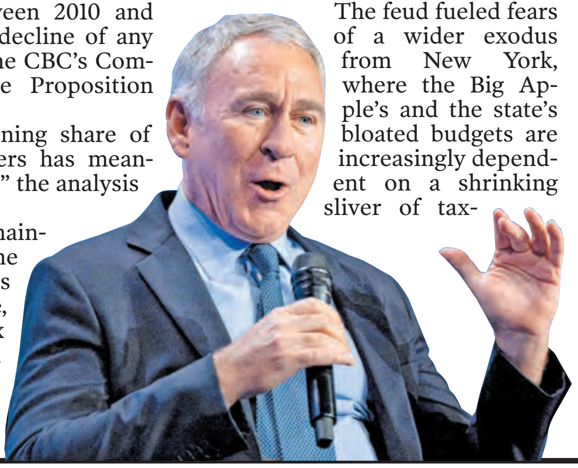
"New York's declining share of high-income taxpayers has meaningful consequences," the analysis states.

"Had New York maintained its share of the nation's millionaires over the past decade, personal income tax collections would have been substantially higher — roughly $10.7 billion more in tax year 2022."

Many experts and business leaders warned Mamdani's stick-it-to-the-rich policy dreams — and their growing success among Albany lawmakers — could supercharge the drip-drip of wealthy people.

Gov. Hochul has firmly opposed an outright hike on the wealthy this year — as she seeks re-election in November — but backed a so-called pied-à-terre tax on luxury second homes in New York City.

Mamdani gleefully gloated about the tax in a social-media video filmed outside billionaire Ken Griffin's $238 million Manhattan penthouse — a stunt that infuriated the hedge-fund titan and prompted him to threaten pulling a $6 billion Park Avenue development.



The feud fueled fears of a wider exodus from New York, where the Big Apple's and the state's bloated budgets are increasingly dependent on a shrinking sliver of taxpayers. "In New York, the top 1% of earners pay about 45% of all state income taxes in any given year, so New York's revenue is very reliant on high earners to stay in New York, and that has been a challenge in recent years," said Jared Walczak, an economist and senior fellow at the Tax Foundation think tank.

The Empire State currently ranks dead last for competitiveness, said Abir Mandal, senior state policy analyst with the Tax Foundation.

"Without reforming the tax structure, New York won't be competitive for attracting population and business," he said.

State elected officials backed policies going back to 2010 that many experts argue have driven up costs and further pressured the tax base, such as former Gov. Andrew Cuomo hiking income taxes on high earners during the coronavirus pandemic and Hochul presiding over a Medicaid spending expected to reach $58 billion by the end of the decade.

Ken Girardin, research fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a conservative public-policy think tank, pointed at the state's tightened rent-control law approved in 2019 and its green energy mandate as a one-two punch that reduced housing supply and raised energy costs.

"Albany is directly responsible for the stagnation," he said.

Additional reporting by Matthew Fischetti

driving off *more* NYC millionaires

TAX THE RICH

WRITING'S ON THE WALL: Mayor Mamdani speaks to economist Joseph Stiglitz (left) in April about his plans to tax the wealthy, which risks chasing away tycoons like hedge-fund big Ken Griffin (inset bottom).

Robert Miller for NY Post

Kiss goodbye the tax money

JUDGE GLOCK

AMERICANS are some of the most mobile people on Earth: They move homes about three times more often than Europeans.

As a recent report shows, that mobility is a problem for New York's rising socialist movement.

A new Citizens Budget Committee report found that New York's share of millionaires, those earning more than a million dollars a year, declined more than any other state since 2010.

The state went from having 12.7% of all millionaires in the nation to 8.7%.

Worse yet, in the more recent years, the state's highest earners have been leaving much faster than its lowest earners.

The flight of the millionaires leaves the rising Democratic Socialists of America movement, and Mayor Mamdani in particular, in a bind.

On one hand, DSA campaigns have centered around attacking the millionaires and billionaires whom they claim are squeezing working citizens.

On the other, the DSA needs those same people to pay exorbitant taxes to fund their social programs.

Mamdani in his campaign wanted to raise taxes on millionaires by 2%.

The New York City DSA's chapter suggests the state should raise taxes on those making over $300,000 a year and on capital gains and inheritances as well.

Unfortunately, New York has little room to further squeeze the well-off: It already ranks second in the nation in terms of percent of income taken as taxes.

New York City's tax rates on the wealthy are already the highest in the nation.

The DSA and its supporters claim that ever-higher taxes won't force the well-off to move, but the evidence contradicts them.

Economists Joshua Rauh and Ryan Shyu found that a California income-tax hike drove almost 1% of top taxable incomes out of the state in a single year.

The loss of taxpayers and other changes among the well-off meant the state lost most of the cash it would otherwise have raised from the tax.

Another study, by Enrico Moretti and Daniel Wilson, looked at how state taxes affected the movement of top scientists, a group that's not thought to be particularly mercenary or focused on cash.

They found a 1% increase in after-tax income in a state brought nearly 2% more star scientists into the state — while a tax increase drove them away.

Political calculation

New York's high rates explain why the state lost more than $7 billion of annual taxpayer income just to Fairfield County in Connecticut over a five-year span, 2019 to 2023 — and more than $7 billion just to Palm Beach County in Florida.

Some on the left celebrate the flight of the well-off from their states and cities.

Socialist Mayor Katie Wilson of Seattle argued that claims that millionaires would leave her state after a tax hike were overblown — and as for "the ones that leave? Like, bye."

There's a political logic to why some might celebrate the flight of the well-off. By driving more of their political enemies away, socialists can ensure their political dominance. Economists call this "the Curley effect," based on former Boston Mayor James Michael Curley's efforts to drive the well-off from the city and cement his political base.

Yet cities cannot survive forever if they keep shrinking the tax base that funds them.

A century ago, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin promised to build "socialism in one country."

Many of New York's socialists are promising to build socialism in one state — or even in one city.

The fact that the people they hope will fund that socialism can always move away means their plans are doomed to fail.

Judge Glock is the director of research and a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

$10M to defend Kirk's 'assassin'

SLOW CASE: Tyler Robinson (with his attorney Kathryn Nester) doesn't yet have a trial date set for allegedly killing Charlie Kirk in September.

Getty Images

'Killer' bill for Utah taxpayers

By PRISCILLA DEGREGORY

Utah taxpayers could end up shelling out more than $10 million for Tyler Robinson's lawyers to defend him in Charlie Kirk's assassination, according to experts.

The whopping potential cost is possible because of the nature of such a sensational capital-murder case — where the stakes are as high as it gets with a defendant's life on the line and likely years of appeals upon conviction, they said.

Robinson's stonewalling lawyers "are litigating anything and everything to try to bring the prosecution to the table to offer a life-without-the-possibility-of-parole deal," Neama Rahmani, a prominent former prosecutor with no ties to the case, told The Post on Monday.

"So yeah, it is costing taxpayers," he said of the drawn-out process, which most recently involved Robinson's preliminary hearings.

"But what do you expect the defense to do? They're playing the hand that they're dealt, right? And it's not a good hand."

'Too poor to pay'

The 23-year-old alleged murderer is accused of fatally shooting the charismatic conservative Turning Point USA co-founder, a married 31-year-old dad of two, as he was speaking in front of a crowd of thousands at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah, last September.

The Utah County Commission approved an initial $1 million in funding last year to pay the salaries of both Robinson's high-powered lawyers and the prosecutors on the case, Fox News reported.

A county lawmaker then said in February that an additional $1 million would be needed from the state for the lawyers, for a total of at least $2 million, after the county had already paid the defense team $349,000, KUTV reported at the time.

Part of the reason for the high price tag is because Robinson — who's been deemed too poor to pay for his own defense — is entitled under state law to be repped by a highly specialized team of lawyers who are experts in the appeals process.

They thus command a higher price — and taxpayers must foot the bill as the painfully slow case plods along while his lawyers try to take possible execution off the table.

Robinson doesn't even have a trial date yet — 10 months after the Sept. 10 shooting.

Prez: God saved me in Butler

President Trump marked the second anniversary of his brush with death in Butler, Pa., by crediting the Almighty for helping him survive.

"Being president is a very dangerous profession," Trump told "Fox & Friends" Monday morning. "It's 5.2% of the presidents, basically, are killed, 8.5% are shot at or shot . . . There's no other industry that I can think of" as dangerous.

Trump had been holding a campaign rally at the Butler Farm Show Grounds on July 13, 2024, when gunman Thomas Crooks opened fire, killing spectator Corey Comperatore and injuring three others, including Trump, before a Secret Service sniper killed Crooks.

Trump was taken to the ground by Secret Service agents seconds after the shots rang out. He then stood up and pumped his fist, defiantly shouting "fight," as blood trickled across his face.

"I said, 'Wow, what was that? It's either the biggest, most violent mosquito in history, or I just got shot,' " he remembered.

"I got lucky. God was watching," the president said, noting his sons' assessment that, at that distance, the gunman had "almost no chance of missing."

Ryan King

D.C. bust of armed man

US Capitol Police arrested a Mississippi man with a firearm near the north entry point to the complex on Monday.

Wendell J. Royster of Columbia, Miss., had driven up to the north barricade at 11:30 a.m. before an officer spotted a handgun in his lap — and he was apprehended.

According to a Capitol Police spokesperson, the 67-year-old had been asking the officer for directions to the US Supreme Court.

"Currently, there does not appear to be a nexus to the Congress," the rep added.

The Supreme Court is seeking more security spending. *Joel Christenson*

Lawyer's wild theory in case of dead teen

The lawyer representing Nolan Wells' family has boosted a wild theory claiming the teen made it back to land before he died — while a pal insists it wasn't Wells in the now-viral video of an altercation beforehand.

Wells, 18, was found dead in water near the uninhabited barrier Horn Island off Mississippi's Gulf Coast two days after vanishing during a Fourth of July boat trip there with friends.

Jackson County Sheriff John Ledbetter has said nothing "yet" points to foul play, but the teen's family is conducting an independent probe amid claims circumstances "don't add up."

Friends pictured with Wells on the day he disappeared have faced criticism after returning to the mainland without him.

The family's lawyer, Ben Crump, shared a post Sunday suggesting Wells may have reached the island after all and later been pictured at a pool party.

"The streets are talking! Now listen, I don't know if these are facts or rumors because no official statements have been confirmed," read the post circulated by Crump from an account called Shannel Tarot TV. "We sometimes have to follow all clues until the truth is found," she wrote.

She posted a photo of a group of young people smiling in a swimming pool on July 5, with a boy in the background whose face is not clearly visible circled in red. The post suggests the boy could be Wells.

The unverified theory would mean that Wells was taken back to the island before his body was discovered there July 6 by a US Park Service ranger.

Alex Diaz

LINDSAY CLANCY
"Disturbing" trial expected

Kid-slay trial jury warning

Jurors at the upcoming trial against Lindsay Clancy, who is accused of strangling her three kids while postpartum, are going to face the "most emotionally disturbing and challenging" case imaginable, her defense lawyer said in court Monday.

Clancy, 35, a former nurse, is slated to go on trial next week in the heartbreaking case alleging she strangled her three young kids with exercise bands and then failed in a suicide attempt, paralyzing herself. Jury selection is scheduled to begin Monday.

Clancy's criminal defense attorney, Kevin Reddington, asked Judge William Sullivan at a final hearing in Plymouth, Mass., Monday to give him extra challenges to dismiss prospective jurors during the selection process due to the tragic nature of the case.

Sullivan said he would consider the motion and rule on it in the coming days. *Priscilla DeGregory*

Dead newborn case reward

The FBI is now offering a $15,000 reward for information leading to an arrest in the death of a newborn found in a porta-potty at a popular Michigan music festival.

The dead infant was discovered in a portable restroom in the camping area of the Electric Forest Festival June 28, the Michigan State Police announced Monday.

"Investigators believe there are individuals with important information relevant to this case who may be reluctant to come forward," police said. *Zoe Hussain*

Versatile 'Jurassic' star Neill dies at 78

WE'LL 'SAUR MISS SAM

Getty Images

Juan Rico / BACKGRID

DINO-MITE: Northern Ireland-born and New Zealand-raised veteran actor Sam Neill amassed an impressive list of credits beginning in the 1970s, but his best-known role is grumpy but kindhearted paleontologist Alan Grant in "Jurassic Park" (inset).

By CHRIS BRADFORD
and DAVID RUSSELL

Sam Neill, the star of the 1993 blockbuster "Jurassic Park," died at 78 on Monday, his family announced.

"It is with immense sadness that the whānau [family] of Sam Neill share the news of his passing on Monday 13th July, in Sydney Australia," the late actor's loved ones wrote via Instagram.

"Sam was surrounded by family and passed with the dignity that has characterized his whole life," the statement continued. "The loss was sudden and unexpected but blessed by the fact that Sam remained cancer free."

Neill's family went on to "express their deepest gratitude to the staff at St Vincent's Private Hospital for their incredible care." They concluded, "More details will be shared later, but for now, on behalf of the family, we ask that you respect their privacy as they navigate this immeasurable loss."

Battle with cancer

Neill's death comes just two months after he announced he was cancer-free following his battle with angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma, a rare and aggressive form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

"I've been living with a particular type of lymphoma for about five years, and I was on chemotherapy and the pretty miserable business but it was keeping me alive," he told Australia's 7News in April.

Neill, who was born in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, in 1947, was forced to seek an alternative when doctors told him chemotherapy stopped working.

"I was at a loss, and it looked like I was on the way out, which wasn't ideal obviously," he said.

He then took part in a trial for CAR T-cell therapy, a form of immunotherapy that trains T cells to destroy cancer cells.

"I've just had a scan just now, and there is no cancer in my body. That's an extraordinary thing," he said, reflecting on the success of his trial. "I'm very, very excited that this can happen. It's time I did another movie."

Neill previously said he was "not remotely afraid" of dying as he battled cancer. "I know I've got it, but I'm not really interested in it," he said in 2023.

Neill, who moved to New Zealand in 1954, was best known for playing the paleontologist Dr. Alan Grant in "Jurassic Park," a role he would reprise in "Jurassic Park III" in 2001 and "Jurassic World: Dominion" in 2022.

Laura Dern, who played Neill's love interest in the franchise, paid tribute to her late co-star in a statement to Page Six.

"Sam was my beloved lifetime friend," the actress shared. "He showed me the depths of loyalty, protectiveness and love always with the driest of wit."

Hollywood tributes

In his own statement to Page Six, Steven Spielberg, who directed "Jurassic Park," called Neill "exceptionally collaborative" and promised the late actor "will never never be forgotten."

Joseph Mazzello, who played Tim Murphy in the 1993 film, called his former co-star's death a "gut punch" in an emotional Instagram video Monday.

Mazzello also said Neill "was still rooting" for him 33 years after they worked together.

Neill's first acting credit was for the 1971 TV movie "The City of No," but his role as Smith in the Roger Donaldson-directed 1977 film "Sleeping Dogs" was considered a big boost for his acting career. "Sleeping Dogs" was the first Kiwi-produced film to be released in theaters across the US.

Neill performed in the Australian drama "The Sullivans," where he played Ben Dawson, appearing in 40 episodes between 1979 and 1980.

During the 1980s, he went on to appear in movies including "Enigma" and "Dead Calm" and had a memorable turn in the 1990 film "The Hunt for Red October."

Neill also starred in the BAFTA-winning series "Peaky Blinders," playing Inspector Chester Campbell in 12 episodes between 2013 and 2014.

"Peaky Blinders" star Cillian Murphy said in a statement to Page Six that he "admired" and "adored" Neill, before calling the late star "one of the kindest, funniest and gentlest people, and one of the finest actors."

Neill is survived by his four children, including son Andrew, whom he gave up for adoption and then reconnected with 25 years later.

LINDSEY GRAHAM 1955-2026

Loss 'Brits' them hard

UK Iranians mourning

By SAMUEL CHAMBERLAIN
and JOSH CHRISTENSON

Members of the Iranian diaspora in London held a candlelight vigil Sunday for Sen. Lindsey Graham hours after the Iran hawk died suddenly at the age of 71.

A few dozen people gathered outside the US Embassy near the River Thames, where they lit candles around a makeshift altar bearing pictures of Graham (R-SC) as well as Iran's so-called "Lion and Sun" flag, used to communicate resistance to the theocratic regime in Tehran.

"Lindsey Graham, rest in peace," the crowd chanted. "Rest in peace and rise in power!"

Graham, who died of a suspected aortic dissection at his Washington, DC, home Saturday evening, was a longtime advocate of military action against the Islamic Republic — frequently meeting with Reza Pahlavi, the son of the last shah of Iran, and wearing "Make Iran Great Again" merchandise during public appearances.

"Lindsey was unabashed. He talked to me about it. He said, 'You know, you have to do it. You have to do it.' He came to me and said, 'Bibi, you have to do it. You have to knock out these nuclear weapons program before they knock us out.' He was very clear about that," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told NBC's "Meet The Press."

'Like Superman'

"He was so clear, he had clarity, he had courage, he had convictions that he believed were at the basis of America and . . . like the Superman comics, you remember? 'Freedom, justice and the American way'? He represented these traditional values," added the Israeli leader.

Graham had cheered President Trump's decision to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities during Operation Midnight Hammer in June 2025 — and to launch strikes with Israeli forces on Feb. 28 of this year in an attempt to topple the regime.

X / @AminBehrozi2

LIGHTS FOR LINDSEY: Iranians in London held a candlelight vigil for Lindsey Graham Sunday near the US Embassy.

The killing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the start of the conflict prompted celebrations in the neighborhood of London known as Little Tehran.

"People often ask me what should we do next when it comes to the murderous, religious Nazi regime in Iran. It's pretty simple. Stand by the protesters demanding an end to their oppression," the South Carolina Republican had said the previous month.

"But it's going to take more than standing by them. We must stop those who are responsible for killing the people by any means necessary ASAP."

As many as 114,000 Iranian-born people call Britain home, per the 2021-22 census.

Official Iran rejoiced in Graham's passing Sunday, with a state TV anchor declaring: "I congratulate the great nation of Iran on Lindsey Graham, the warmongering and anti-Iranian US senator, having gone to hell."

schamberlain@nypost.com

SIS ACT

Lindsey sib picked to finish term

By RYAN KING

WASHINGTON — South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster has tapped late Sen. Lindsey Graham's sister, Darline Graham Nordone, as interim senator to serve out the remainder of his term.

Graham (R-SC), 71, was up for re-election this election cycle and had just clinched the GOP nod. South Carolina is expected to hold a special primary election on Aug. 11 to find a new GOP standard-bearer to succeed him after his sister finishes up the rest of his term in January 2027.

"Lindsey took care of his little sister in years long departed. It's my honor to ask his little sister, Darline Graham, to finish his work for him now," McMaster announced at a press conference, with dozens of the late senator's staffers and campaign advisers standing behind him and Darline, 62.

Trump, Thune support

Darline also had the support of President Trump and Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD). She will be sworn into office Tuesday afternoon.

Graham's grieving sister said she felt "confident" taking up her brother's mantle knowing she has the support of his staff and colleagues.

"I think this is what Lindsey would have wanted, and I plan to honor him in this way," Darline said. "To Lindsey, I miss you more than I can even put into words, but I'm going to do this. I got it."

Darline is a married mother of two daughters and also a grandmother.

The Central, SC, native has never held elected public office before, but she has "dedicated her career to public service," according to the governor's office.

Since 2019, Darline has served as Commissioner of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind, where she "has worked to expand opportunities for South Carolinians who are blind or have low vision to achieve employment and independence," McMaster's office noted in a press release.

Prior to her appointment as commissioner, Darline held roles with Clemson University, the South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce and the South Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation for nearly 30 years, the governor's office said.

"In addition to her full-time role as SCCB Commissioner, Ms. Graham currently serves on the South Carolina State Workforce Development Board and is president-elect of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind," the release continued.

Graham died suddenly Saturday evening after suffering a tear in his aorta, which takes blood from the heart to distribute to the rest of the body, according to his office.

Preliminary findings from the Washington, DC, medical examiner's office determined that the ruptured aorta was brought on by chronic heart disease.

Emergency responders arrived at the Republican senator's Capitol Hill home at around 8:30 p.m. after getting a call about an individual suffering from chest pains, according to scanner audio.

Medics performed CPR as Graham went into cardiac arrest a half hour later. He was rushed to George Washington University Hospital, where he died.

Ahead of McMaster's announcement, Trump urged the governor to tap Darline as his interim successor. "This would be a fabulous tribute to Lindsey, who loved her dearly!" Trump posted on Truth Social.

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) agreed and told The Post that he has known the late South Carolina senator's sister "for years and she's a constituent of mine in Lexington County."

"I have faith in Gov. McMaster that he will make the right decision, but I would support the president's recommendation," Wilson said.

During his announcement, McMaster indicated that he asked Darline to replace her brother in the Senate "in the wee hours of Sunday morning," shortly after Gra-

TO FOLLOW

ham's death, and said she "agreed to serve through tears."

Parents died

The late senator had become his sister's legal guardian in his early 20s after their parents died and he enlisted in the Air Force.

That helped her receive his military benefits.

Darline commended him for ensuring she completed high school and received a college education.

The Graham parents ran a bar and pool hall in Central, SC, where, for a time, they raised their two kids in a backroom, the senator later shared in a memoir.

Their father, Florence James Graham, died of a heart attack at age 69. Fifteen months before, their mother died of cancer in 1976.

Darline was 13 years old at the time, and Lindsey Graham, then 22, told her: "I'm going to take care of you."

"I was just a kid. I remembered that day Lindsey came running in and just grabbed me up and hugged me," she said in a recent video posted by the senator's office. "He's always been there for me. No matter what."

During his long-shot 2016 presidential campaign, the South Carolina bachelor suggested that she would serve as first lady if he won.

"I've got a sister, she could play that role if necessary," he told the Daily Mail in a June 2015 interview when asked about being the first lifelong bachelor in the White House since James Buchanan in the 1850s.

After Trump publicly pushed for her to take Graham's seat through the remainder of his term, Darline told The Post she was "devastated" by his unexpected passing.

"Lindsey has always been there for me and now I will be there for him," she said after being tapped by McMaster. "My brother was the most amazing person, outstanding leader and just a genuinely good man. He was kind and considerate and loved by his family. . . . He worked nonstop to make our state, country and world better."

AP; Bloomberg via Getty Images

LEGACY: Darline Graham Nordone (above and left hugging older brother Sen. Lindsey Graham) will serve out the last six months of his term in the US Senate after he died Saturday at age 71.

Too much to do to 'die now'

Sen. Lindsey Graham joked, "I can't die now" and wanted to wait to get medical help until after he appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press" Sunday — before he passed away from a suspected ruptured aorta Saturday.

The 71-year-old senator, who was due to appear on Sunday's episode of "Meet the Press," told someone close to him he was feeling unwell earlier Saturday, Axios reported.

"I can't die now. I still need to do the Russia sanctions, get Iran sorted out and do Israeli-Saudi normalization," the Trump ally quipped, according to the source.

Graham spoke with President Trump on Saturday evening about the trip to Ukraine he had just returned from and the bipartisan Russian sanctions package the pol was trying to get through Congress alongside Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.).

The proposed measure would allow the Trump administration to slap hefty tariffs on nations fueling Vladimir Putin's war machine via the purchase of Russian energy. *Chris Bradford*

He recanted 1/6 rip: Don

President Trump claimed Monday that the late Sen. Lindsey Graham had just "one bad moment" — when the South Carolina Republican denounced the 45th president on the Senate floor in the aftermath of the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot.

"He had one bad moment, and that was on the Jan. 6 thing when he stood up [and said], 'All right, now I've had it. That's it. I can't do it anymore,' " Trump told "Fox & Friends" during a phone interview.

"Then he called me like about 40 minutes later, and he said, 'Did I really say that? I can't believe it.' And he took it back."

Graham, 71, appeared to turn his back on Trump after his supporters stormed the Capitol and delayed the official count of Joe Biden's 2020 Electoral College victory. *Ryan King*

Fighting ‘dirty’ in co-op war

By LAUREN ELKIES SCHRAM

It all started on a soggy Sunday afternoon in June 2017, and has since grown into a rather crappy ordeal.

Gary Paul was sitting on the toilet in his Upper West Side studio co-op apartment reading the paper when he claims he noticed brown muck oozing down his bathroom mirrors. Looking up, he said he saw the crown molding splitting. Then came the sound: water rushing inside the walls, running down the pipes.

Allegedly stemming from a leaky toilet in the unit above, he claims it quickly spread to his first-floor kitchen, flooded the hallway outside with an inch of water and eventually seeped into the basement.

And it’s all far from flushed away.

What followed was a messy, fingers-pointed-every-way legal battle at 108 W. 87th St. Nine years later, the fight is still ongoing.

“The co-op let the water run for over 18 hours after being notified, as it was a Sunday afternoon, and they thought they’d get to it the next day, with a certain amount of careless lack of duty,” Paul claimed to The Post. “Thousands of gallons poured over my apartment from when it was discovered until midday the next day when management arrived, with keys, and a few hours later when a plumber arrived to arrest the flow of water.”

Frustrated, Paul, a design consultant with a Harvard graduate degree, stopped paying his then-$581-a-month maintenance fee and filed a $650,000 lawsuit (later upped to $750,000 upon amending the complaint) in damages alone against the co-op, the building management, the maintenance company (which was subsequently dismissed) and his upstairs neighbors, “because they didn’t give me the money for the insurance and they weren’t remediating the mold,” he claimed. Ever since, Paul, who no longer owns the apartment, has bounced from rental to rental.

Amid the wreckage

“The case is worth over a million dollars at this point because of the legal fees and diminished fair rental value and [there’s] property damage because there’s a lot of personal property that was damaged, too, ultimately,” Paul’s attorney, Ian Brandt, told The Post.

Among the alleged destruction: hand-printed Morris & Co. foyer wallpaper, which Paul told The Post would cost $13,000 in 2017 to replace.

In addition, court records detail allegedly damaged contents, like a Christopher Dresser-designed claret jug from the 19th century, which would cost $2,340 to replace in 2017 figures.

As for alleged structural damage, beyond the split crown molding, Paul added water pooled around the electrical panel — and then inside of it.

The situation went from litigating a $50,000 to $80,000 repair, Brandt said, to between $700,000 or $800,000 in damages today.

The co-op, however, tells a completely different story.

“He’s been a nightmare for us,” said co-op president Michael Laba, who claimed Paul has held a bitter grudge ever since he was voted off the board nearly two decades ago, told The Post.

Laba added that management responded appropriately, but Paul, 72, refused to let anyone into his apartment to dry it out, claiming he had severe dust allergies.

Laba alleges Paul was actually hoping mold would grow and ripped out his own stove, tub and drywall just to claim the apartment was destroyed, he told The Post.

Flood of complaints

The building eventually re-outfitted the unit, but Paul filed a barrage of complaints with city agencies over things like missing smoke detectors, a defective electric panel and unfinished work, complaints — which city records show led to a handful of violations — that Laba told The Post were unfair.

“I filed a complaint for all these things because I was trying to get them to take action to help get the apartment fixed,” said Paul, who referred to himself as “a stickler to rules.” “Whether they did it or I did it, they refused to move forward on the remediation so I could build the apartment.”

Ironically, Paul was on the other side of a mold issue in the building when he was president of the co-op board.

After discovering mold while renovating her apartment in February 2005, a shareholder sued in 2006 for failing to “complete the removal of sheet rock from areas of the premises affected or potentially affected by mold,” among other issues, per court documents.

In eerily similar details to Paul’s case, court documents say about the old case: “In opposition, the respondents allege that they properly removed all sheet rock, conducted a visual inspection for the presence of mold and returned to conduct air testing.”

Over the latter years of his time at 108 W. 87th St., the co-op found Paul to be “incessantly combative,” according to co-op meeting minutes from Feb. 23, 2018. Paul had emailed Cornerstone Management Systems’ Michelle Greenspan, the managing agent, “no less than 290 times” in what she described as “consistently adversarial” messages, the minutes indicate. Earlier minutes — from the Nov. 21, 2017, meeting — referred to Paul as a “constantly-disgruntled shareholder.” Greenspan, who is not personally a defendant in the lawsuit, declined to comment.

Paul was voted off the co-op board, and as a result Laba alleges Paul “was extremely bitter.” “That happened 18 years ago. He’s been looking for reasons to sue us,” claimed Laba, who’s been board president for 18 years.

The management company’s attorney didn’t respond to a request for comment.

BATTLE IS STILL ON: Nine years after water damage in his studio apartment (inset), resident Gary Paul is battling the Upper West side co-op.

Olga Ginzburg

SILENT 'PLAT'FORMS

Blackout by Google and Apple news

By CHRIS NESI

Two of the most popular news-aggregating services systematically suppressed scores of articles about disgraced former Maine Senate candidate Graham Platner for months during his ill-fated campaign, until the weight of his scandals finally became too much to ignore, a shocking new study has found.

Media Research Center (MRC) revealed that both Apple News and Google News published exactly zero stories between last November and May covering controversies, including Platner's Nazi tattoo and his offensive Reddit posts.

The study also found that the tech giants failed to promote "at least 112" news stories published by conservative-leaning outlets that investigated Platner's disturbing history during that November-May period.

MRC President David Bozell went so far as to accuse the tech platforms of running a "protection racket" for Platner by memory-holing unflattering coverage as it slowly became obvious the left had erred in holding him up as a blue-collar "everyman" in his campaign to unseat Sen. Susan Collins.

'Buried scandals'

The MRC study said the coverage blackout began after a poll released in October called Platner the Democrat with the best chance to defeat the incumbent, and didn't let up until The New York Times' May 30 report about him sexting women outside his marriage.

"For months, while Platner looked like the one Democrat who could beat Susan Collins, the two most powerful news apps in America buried scandal after scandal," Bozell said.

"Then the polls turned, Platner became a liability, and suddenly the blackout ended. News judgment had nothing to do with it."

Google firmly pushed back, suggesting the study "mistakes volume of news for bias" while dismissing the methodology and providing a link to "facts" about Google News, a Google spokesperson said.

THEY DON'T KNOW
MAINE
GRAHAM PLATNER
FOR U.S. SENATE

Bloomberg via Getty Images

MAINE-LY QUIET: A study found Google and Apple suppressed unflattering coverage of Graham Platner.

Platner's campaign finally imploded, and he dropped out of the race last week after two ex-girlfriends came forward accusing him of sexual misconduct — allegations he vehemently denies.

In an interview with Politico, Jennifer Racicot claimed Platner drunkenly entered her home without her permission and sexually assaulted her in 2021.

Then Lyndsey Fifield came forward and told The Washington Post that Platner had removed condoms during intercourse without her permission or awareness, a sleazy practice known as "stealthing" that has been criminalized in several states.

Fifield had previously told the Times that Platner physically abused her, including one incident where he allegedly "twisted her arm behind her back, shoved her into a bedroom and held the door closed from the other side so she couldn't get out."

Leading Democrats, including Sens. Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Ruben Gallego, as well as California Rep. Ro Khanna, stood by the beleaguered purported oyster farmer as the scandals piled up, shamefully mortgaging their "#metoo" and anti-Nazi credentials until the sexual assault allegations proved a bridge too far.

In a statement posted on X last Wednesday, Platner announced the suspension of his campaign, taking not a shred of blame for the circumstances that led to his departure and instead calling out "large forces," "corporate media" and the "political establishment" for trying to force him out of the race.

cnesi@nypost.com

MORRIS KATZ
Target of DSA.

Katz still my man – Mam

Mayor Mamdani is still a Katz person, saying Monday that he's sticking with close adviser Morris Katz after his Democratic Socialists of America comrades urged members to freeze him out.

"I will continue to work with Morris Katz, who remains as a top adviser of mine," Mamdani said.

Katz, 27, came under lefty fire for his role in propping up failed Maine Democratic Senate nominee Graham Platner.

He had been a rising star in progressive political circles after helping Mamdani turn from dark horse candidate to leader of an unabashedly leftist faction within the Democratic Party.

Katz doggedly worked on Platner's troubled campaign as it was buffeted by a spate of disturbing revelations, from the candidate's Nazi-linked tattoo to accusations of mistreating women.

After Platner finally ended his campaign last week, a scathing letter from the city's DSA chapter circulated, urging members to cut ties with the tainted Katz.

"Even as the scandals mounted, Katz continued to put the full weight of his consultancy behind Platner's candidacy," the letter said. *Matthew Fischetti and Matt Troutman*

13-yr.-old shot in 'gang hit'

A 13-year-old boy was gunned down while having a sleepover with his friends when the house they were in was shot up in a suspected gang hit that also killed a man there.

Demarcus Shirley, 13, was caught in the crossfire when dozens of shots were fired into the home in Gresham Park, Ga., at around 4 a.m. July 2 in a drive-by attack that also killed Chauncey Newman, 45, and a dog, Atlanta News First reported.

Investigators have not revealed the motive behind the shooting, but gang involvement was "likely," according to an arrest warrant seen by KPTV.

Keyshun Webb, 21, has been charged with two counts of murder.

Chris Bradford

Breaking (heart) and entering

An unhinged ex was caught breaking into the Pennsylvania home of a man she briefly dated in a strange attempt to win back the victim, who said he noticed things inside his place had been mysteriously rearranged for weeks.

Lindsay Harris' bizarre attempts at romance were uncovered after she was caught sneaking into her former flame's Bucks County home in late June, police said.

Cops said they spotted Harris, 30, sneaking into the man's house through a window, carrying a bottle of red wine, NBC Philadelphia reported.

But what Harris saw as a romantic gesture, the alarmed man saw as breaking and entering, and he called 911. *David DeTurris*

ICE shoots man dead

Colombian 'drove' car at agents

WILD DAY IN MAINE: ICE agents follow a car (above) after it nearly ran over some of them Monday. The shot driver was tended to under a tent (below) before he died.

Reuters (2)

By ANTHONY BLAIR

A Colombian national was shot dead Monday while trying to mow down ICE officers in Maine, officials and witnesses said, with video showing the mortally wounded man being dragged from his car, falling to the ground and then being cuffed.

The chaos unfolded as ICE was surveilling the last known address of an illegal migrant with a deportation order in Biddeford at around 7 a.m., according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Around that time, an "illegal alien" fled the home in a car and immigration officers gave chase, attempting to pull the man over, DHS said.

But the man tried to flee, and an ICE officer opened fire, striking the driver.

"The vehicle attempted to flee the scene and, fearing for public safety, an officer discharged his weapon," DHS said in a statement.

"The driver of the vehicle was struck, and emergency services were immediately contacted. He passed away from his injuries."

The Colombian national was identified by neighbors as Joan Sebastian Guerrero, 26, who lived with his wife and infant daughter, the Portland Press Herald reported.

Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) said hours after the shooting that Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin told him the man was the target of a warrant, CNN reported. But King later said Mullin corrected that statement to say there was no warrant.

Graphic footage on social media captured the victim lying by the side of the road near his car, with a bullet hole visible through the driver's side of the front windshield, the Press Herald reported.

'I tried to stop'

Officers in green vests surrounded the car and drew their weapons at the driver, who appeared to drive directly at them, said witness Lucas Scott, 18.

"The car was put into drive and was trying to hit the ICE officer," Scott said, adding that an agent fired roughly four shots in response. "I just heard the popping, but I did see him draw his gun."

Ring-camera footage from a nearby house captured the sound of five or six gunshots at the time.

Another witness described seeing the driver get out of the car, bleeding profusely from his head.

"He said, 'I tried to stop,' " nearby resident Daniel Boucher said.

The driver was authorized to work in the US and had been issued a Social Security number, according to Presente! Maine, a Portland-based aid organization.

"He was a member of our community, a neighbor, and a human being whose life was cut tragically short," the organization said in a joint statement with the Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition. "We extend our deepest condolences to his family, loved ones, and everyone now grieving this unimaginable loss."

Locals reported seeing an increase in ICE activity in Biddeford in recent weeks.

Kathy hits DHS on upstate expansion

Gov. Hochul is once again accusing federal immigration authorities of overreach for allegedly planning to expand detention facilities upstate.

In a letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin, Hochul is demanding answers from ICE about a rumored lease on a warehouse in the Hudson Valley near Newburgh, as well as plans to expand detention capacity at federal facilities in Rochester and Batavia.

"New Yorkers, like all Americans, deserve honest answers about what their federal government is doing in their communities. And I demand your department provide that transparency," Hochul asserts in the letter.

Hochul and lefty New York Democrats have been under renewed fire from President Trump and senior White House officials like border czar Tom Homan after passing a sweeping set of sanctuary policies as part of the state budget this year.

The immigration package included specific measures preventing local governments from permitting ICE to use their detention facilities.

Hochul stopped short of accusing ICE of violating any of those policies in her letter.

A Hochul spokesperson admitted to The Post that the new sanctuary provisions can't be used to block the rumored facilities because the rules don't apply to the feds directly, only restricting how localities go about permitting detention centers if ICE asks for approval.

Hochul's letter was first reported by Politico Monday morning.

Vaughn Golden

China is holding a US expert

A Chinese-born American seismologist who has published US-funded work on detecting North Korean nuclear tests has been detained in China for nearly two years and faces trial on spying charges, according to his wife, US lawmakers and two hostage advocacy groups.

The case of Youlin Chen, reported here for the first time, adds an irritant to the tense relationship between the nuclear-armed rivals and comes as President Trump seeks to keep the relationship steady following last year's trade war.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio on March 19 designated Chen, 54, as "wrongfully detained," making his release a top US priority.

The Trump administration has withheld a public announcement to allow space for high-level diplomacy aimed at securing his freedom, according to his wife, Yufang Rong.

A US source familiar with Chen's case said the administration was "focused on gaining his release from his unjustifiable detention."

Chen, who became a US citizen in 2011 and lives in Boston, is the only American currently held in China designated as wrongfully detained, officials said.

Reuters

Chem leak rules eased

President Trump signed a proclamation Thursday granting certain chemical manufacturers a two-year exemption from a Biden-era Environmental Protection Agency emissions-control rule, the White House said.

He said the required compliance technology is not commercially available and that continued operation of the facilities is a matter of national security.

The proclamation covers companies that produce chemicals used in semiconductor production, medical device sterilization, advanced manufacturing and defense systems. *Reuters*

Cat safe after toss from car

Cat-astrophe averted.

An adorable cat was rescued after being thrown from a moving car that was crossing a bridge between Maryland and Virginia, according to authorities.

A concerned witness reported spotting a person attempting to toss a feline from a moving car on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge on Sunday, according to the Prince George's County Division of the Maryland-National Capital Park Police.

Police rushed to the scene and rescued the frightened orange furball (above) without injury, cops said.

"Come on. I got you, baby. You can do it," an officer told the meowing cat while trying to coax it from behind the railing of the bridge in a video posted by the department.

Photos also captured the tiny feline perched on the bridge spanning the Potomac River and wailing open-mouthed in an officer's arms.

The cat is now "receiving the care it deserves," cops said. *Zoe Hussain*

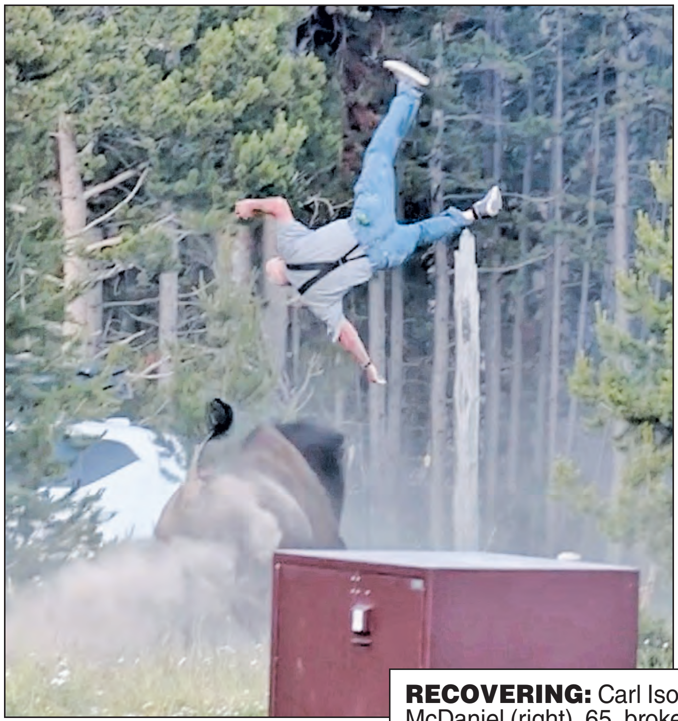
Cohen, Trump make amends

Donald Trump's turncoat former fixer Michael Cohen on Monday revealed how he mended fences with the president after their messy falling out amid Trump's New York "hush money" trial.

Cohen, during an event plugging his new gig at WABC radio, credited his claim that state Attorney General Letitia James and Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg had coerced him to turn on Trump with bringing him back into the president's good graces.

Kevin Sheehan

'OK' after surgery, thankful to be alive



Facebook / Carl McDaniel; Mike MacLeod/NewsFlare

RECOVERING: Carl Isom-McDaniel (right), 65, broke his femur in four places after being tossed in the air by a bison at Yellowstone National Park on Friday, but is already able to stand.

BUFFALO VIC RAM TOUGH

By ALEX DIAZ

The grandfather who went wildly viral after he was filmed being tossed in the air by a bison at Yellowstone National Park reassured everyone he is "OK," despite undergoing surgery for a broken thigh bone.

Carl Isom-McDaniel, 65, was thrown about 8 feet in the air by the wild animal Friday night while visiting the park with his 13-year-old grandson.

He broke his femur, the strongest bone in the body, in four places near his hip, but was already able to stand Monday after having surgery the day before, he told CNN.

'Could have gored me'

"Thank you everyone I am OK," McDaniel posted to his Facebook account late Sunday with a thumbs-up emoji.

The retiree and community leader from Kendall, Wash., also praised the animal for not killing him during the attack.

"When I was on the ground immobile, unable to move, he was right on top of me," McDaniel told CNN.

"He could have stomped on me, he could have gored me, he could have done almost anything to take my life, and he did not do so."

Mike MacLeod, the professional photographer who captured the video, said McDaniel was "in good spirits" as soon as the danger was over, and mostly worried that people would think he had upset the wild animal.

"He was in a lot of pain, but was conscious and joking the whole time," the shutterbug told Cowboy State Daily, a Wyoming outlet.

"He was really worried and wanted to see the video to make sure that it wasn't his fault," MacLeod added. "It's not his fault. You can tell from the very beginning. That was a really, really angry bison."

Before the terrifying attack, the bison — likely hopped up on testosterone at the start of mating season — had already menaced several groups of visitors, including a group of teenage boys who quickly scattered when the bison charged, the photographer said.

After scaring off the teens, the bison took a moment to rest in the dirt near a picnic table just off a campground road that was still covered in dinner leftovers.

It was at that moment McDaniel and his grandson stopped their pickup truck to take pictures of the bison, unaware he was in an irritated state.

'Really, really angry'

"The bison stopped rolling in the dust and kind of sat up. He's looking in the direction of those two," MacLeod said. "And as soon as they stop taking pictures, the bison stands up and the grandfather's like, 'Let's get out of here. I don't like this.' "

Another pickup truck drove by, which appeared to briefly capture the bison's attention.

However, once the vehicle was out of sight, the massive creature turned his attention to McDaniel and his grandson, chasing them around a copse of pine trees.

The grandson was able to escape using some fancy footwork, but McDaniel was a sitting duck as the bison charged at him, hooking him with his left horn near his hip before flipping him into the air.

MacLeod, who was watching in horror from a distance, said he could tell the bison was "really, really angry" by his body language — his head rearing up and down in an aggressive manner.

The photographer added that he was so afraid that the bison was going to gore McDaniel on the ground that he stopped filming, ran at the animal while yelling and was "trying to be as big and intimidating as possible."

Several other bystanders followed suit, causing the bison to run off. Fellow tourists stayed by McDaniel's side while they waited for a park ambulance to transport him to a hospital for treatment, which arrived about 10 minutes later.

MacLeod stressed that every visitor he observed in the park Friday, including McDaniel and his grandson, were keeping a "respectful distance" from the animal.

Jay-Z guards in umpire state

THE stars inside **Jay-Z**'s "Extra Innings" show didn't even know about the pandemonium outside Yankee Stadium until around an hour before the set began, we're told.

On Sunday night, as concertgoers streamed into the last of a three-night stand at the Bronx landmark, hordes of fans broke through security, forcing the venue into lockdown.

Thousands of Hov devotees were forced to wait for hours while security got the situation under control. But we're told that VIPs were blissfully unaware of the situation.

"I have not experienced anything like that, mainly because, [with] us thankfully being in a secure safe space, we didn't know what was going on outside," Jay-Z's musical co-director **Adam Blackstone** said.

The concert was scheduled to start at 8 p.m., with Blackstone — who, along with **Young Guru** and **Omar Edwards**, help put the show together — playing bass. And before the show, he tells us, he was backstage getting ready, business as usual, with some of the guest performers on the bill.

"I was with **Teyana** [**Taylor**, who sang the **Mary J. Blige** part from 'Can't Knock the Hustle' at the show], **Usher** and **Jeezy**. [They're all] in their routines . . . It's very much tunnel vision . . . It wasn't until [showtime] started getting pushed back that I started asking questions," he said.

Fans weren't the only ones waiting for hours to enter the stadium. A source told Page Six **Fabolous** was barred from entry, and "Abbott Elementary" star **Janelle James** was "stuck outside for three hours." "Fabolous got in pretty quick. He was close to [the] front and recognized, but Janelle was at the suite entrance . . . A security guard recognized her and they let her in, and then people bum-rushed behind her. They were trying to hold people back. It was so bad," the concertgoer said.

The rowdy crowd pushed the show into the next morning, with the first song starting at 12:15 a.m. on Monday.

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Fraud Gut check

CBS News chief correspondent **Matt Gutman** says he could have lost thousands in a dangerous scam. The journalist said in a video posted online that a scammer called and convinced him that "significant fraud activity" was taking place at his local LA bank and that they needed him to help catch the swindlers. The woman on the phone told him to go to the location and withdraw his savings. He said he found it "a little weird" but went anyway. It was only when the scammer said not to tell staff because "they might be in on it" that he caught on to her con. "The dangerous part is that I would've been walking around with thousands . . . in cash at a place known to those scammers," he said, who then typically "rob you."

Wild Westie livin'

ART intimidating life! **J.K. Simmons** is starring in new drama "The Westies" as crime boss of the Irish American gang, and he told Page Six he had some real-life research to draw on because he lived in the Westies' old stomping grounds, Hell's Kitchen, in the '80s. "I used to look over my shoulder a lot coming home at 1 a.m. after the post-theater shift at Joe Allen, with a pocketful of cash, with my tips that night, going to my rat- and roach-infested apartment!" Simmons (above) told us at the MGM+ series premiere.

It was clutch-and-go for Charlize Theron on the Upper East Side, where she left the Carlyle to do press for her movie "The Odyssey."

TheStewartofNY/GC Images

Eastern bloc party

IT was a starry weekend in the Hamptons. **Justin** and **Hailey Bieber** were seen having dinner at Camp Rubirosa in East Hampton, while **Robert Downey Jr.**, **Marci Klein**, **Liev Schreiber**, **Katie Holmes**, **Donna Karan** and more attended a screening of **Olivia Wilde**'s new movie "The Invite." **Neil Patrick Harris** and **David Burtka** held a cocktail party at their East Hampton home to support God's Love We Deliver, while country stars **Dan** + **Shay** performed a number of their hits at Stephen Talkhouse in Amagansett for a crowd that included **Don Lemon**, **Steve Madden** and roastmaster **Jeff Ross** for Soho Sessions, benefiting the Flag Art Foundation and mental health organization NAMI. In Montauk, **Alix Earle** went to Mary Lou's with her whole family, including her dad; her stepmom, former call girl **Ashley Dupré**; her mother, **Alisa Earle**; and Alisa's boyfriend, **Todd Galski**. The group were spotted passing around a bottle of Don Julio 1942. Earle was in town to promote her drink brand, SipMargs, at Surf Lodge. In Bridgehampton, the Daily Front Row celebrated the Hamptons' most stylish with a chic poolside fête at **Purvi Padia**'s mansion.

'Affairs' in order

NUZZIGATE seems to be well and truly behind us. As Page Six reported, **Olivia Nuzzi** herself has moved on with another man after her digital dalliance with **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** that ended in her exit from New York magazine. And now we hear that RFK Jr. and wife **Cheryl Hines** (above) seem firmly back on track, acting like "a teenage couple in love" — even away from the cameras. "They were holding hands and kissing while touring Belgrade," says a Slavic spy. "They were super affectionate with each other. He had his arm around her and at one point kissed her. They acted like a teenage couple in love with all his sexting scandals clearly in the rearview mirror." We previously reported that, 18 months after the scandal broke, Nuzzi is dating Vice co-founder **Shane Smith**.

Kids Pitt-ch new name in daily

ANGELINA Jolie and **Brad Pitt**'s kids **Zahara** and **Maddox** took out newspaper ads as the next step in dropping their father's last name, report PageSix.com's **Jolie Zenna** and **Sarah Jones**. Court documents obtained by Page Six yesterday show Zahara, 21, published her petition to drop the actor's surname in the Los Angeles Daily Journal once a week for four consecutive weeks, on June 16, June 23, June 30 and July 7. Publicly publishing a petition in a newspaper is required in California for a legal name change. The newspaper ad also calls for anyone against the change to submit a written opposition before the final hearing. Zahara now has a Sept. 28 court hearing for a judge to rule on the motion. If no one objects, the judge can approve the request. As for Maddox, court docs obtained by Page Six show the 24-year-old's petition ran in the same publication as his sister's, on June 10, June 17, June 24 and July 1. His hearing is scheduled for Sept. 14. As Page Six previously reported, Zahara legally requested her name be Zahara Jolie instead of Zahara Jolie-Pitt last month. Maddox filed the same request in May. Brad and Angelina have six children in total: Maddox; **Pax**, 22; Zahara; **Shiloh**, 20; and twins **Knox** and **Vivienne**, 18. All six kids have reportedly distanced themselves from the "F1" star following his and Jolie's 2016 split.

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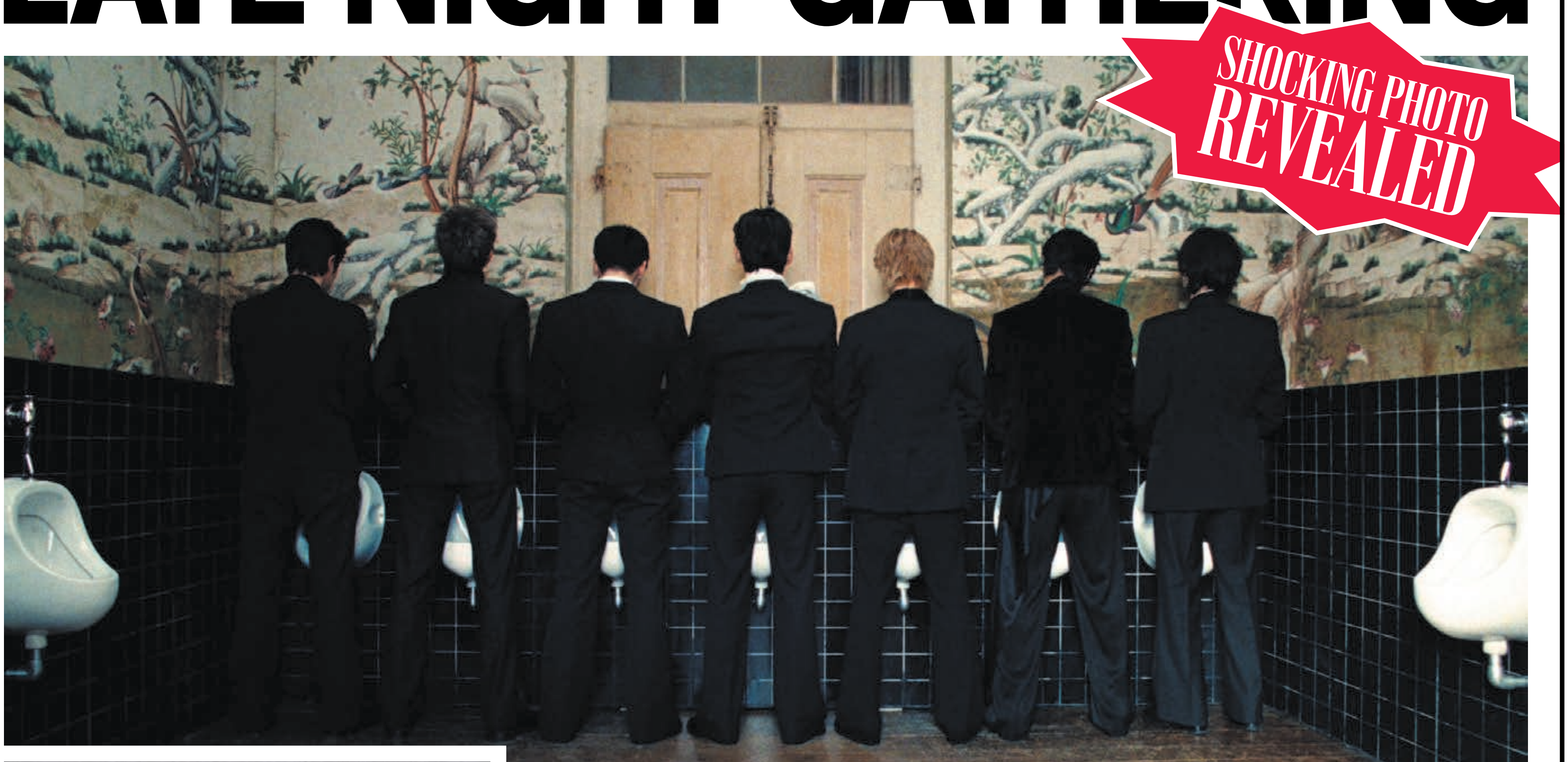
tips@PageSix.com

BIGHIT MUSIC

TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026 BIGHIT MUSIC, HYBE · IBIGHIT.COM BTS · 2026BTS.COM

BTS MEMBERS SEEN IN BATHROOM AMID MYSTERIOUS LATE-NIGHT GATHERING



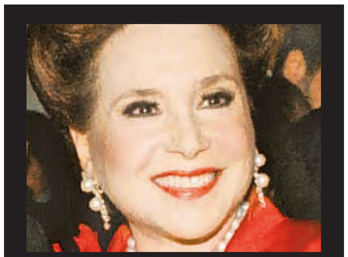
Questions have been raised following a late-night photo appearing to show all seven BTS members together in what appears to be an unexpected setting.

While the gathering itself remains unconfirmed, some have questioned **whether the situation was entirely normal**. The image has quickly sparked curiosity and speculation.

When asked for comment, a source familiar with the situation responded, "We're not in a position to comment any further at this time."

The source declined to elaborate, but noted that **more information will be revealed on July 17**.

Strong current in beach read



Cindy Adams

SUMMERTIME. Sand, sun, surf, swim, shove it. It's best-seller time.

Bill O'Reilly — of whom you may have heard — is out — surprise! surprise! — with a new book. Less time than he usually spends chopping lefties, he's knocked off another read faster than Moses threw together those Commandments.

My advance reader copy paperback — St. Martin's Press — is nearly 300 pages. It's "Confronting America: What Has to Change." Chapters like "Loyalty," "Are You a Patriot," "Fake News," "God Help Us," "The Destroyers," "The Deceivers," "The Dilemma."

Opens with 1620's Pilgrim separatists: "Largely loons." Ends with "57% of today's Americans check their hand-held phones 224 times a day." And: "70% cannot name their state senators." And: "Men lie about 6 times a day; women lie roughly 3 times."

Divorce? 1960: 14%. 2025: 50%. Chapter 9, "Working for a Living," reports that Martin Van Buren became US president "because he kissed Andrew Jackson's tush."

Page 57: "The Right doesn't care about the drug issue. They feel drug-involved people deserve their fate. Leftists refuse to acknowledge the reality."

Good read. Out Sept. 15.

Maine-ly polished

I spent July Fourth with friends in Maine. It has lobsters and aged gents with bare feet in thong slippers. Nice. Especially when those antique nails remain gray in color. Not much else besides.

I finally figured out the reason for why there's the state of Maine. America needed something to stick between New Hampshire and Canada.

Besides trees, what they have in Maine — who knows. I only know nothing's in it that looks, sniffs, tastes or dresses like New York City.

So, go. Enjoy yourself. Forget L.L.Bean. Just bring nail polish for the geezers.

James Keivom/NY Post

After support beams buckled last week at this 42nd Street high rise (above), some say living in new construction is too risky.

Build it better!

NEW York. Back in civilization. A Midtown high-rise crumbling happens to be similar to information I heard last year. Topline contractors who adhere to every rule, pay every tariff, obey all tack-on extras and are behind many top NYC buildings told me this. Understand, they told me this sitting in my kitchen a year ago.

Today's builders, interested in cutting corners and making a buck, involve themselves with cheapo non-union help. Some are inexperienced, not expensive, come from who-knows-where, do not know their valves from a hole in the ground, have not possibly been involved in a major NYC high-rise construction before — and eager to knock off a quick buck. Their ability? Do it fast, do it now, do it cheap, make it look good — and get out. Walls crumble, elevators stall, water doesn't come out of faucets, big money is paid, window panes shake. And that's dealing with some of the newer slick-looking buildings.

I'm telling you what I know. Sitting in my kitchen, the pros told it to me. I knew it long back when I considered moving.

FROM **Jim Fragale**: Palm Springs co-op: Nighttime. Crooks stole the workings of two hot tubs. Later, a NYC AA member put a $50 bill in the community basket, made change and the fifty was counterfeit.

Not only in New York, kids, not only.

Post Weather Report

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Tuesday

Today: Mostly sunny; breezy, hot and more humid. High 89 to 95.

Tonight: Clear, warm and humid. Low 75 to 81.

Wednesday

HOT

Tomorrow: Mostly sunny; breezy, very hot and humid. High 95 to 101.

Tomorrow night: Mostly cloudy. Low 72 to 78.

Thursday

Breezy and hot. High 89 to 95.

Evening
Partly cloudy. Low 68 to 74.

Friday

Very warm. High 86 to 92.

Evening
A t-storm around. Low 66 to 72.

Almanac

YESTERDAY'S CONDITIONS AT CENTRAL PARK THROUGH 6PM

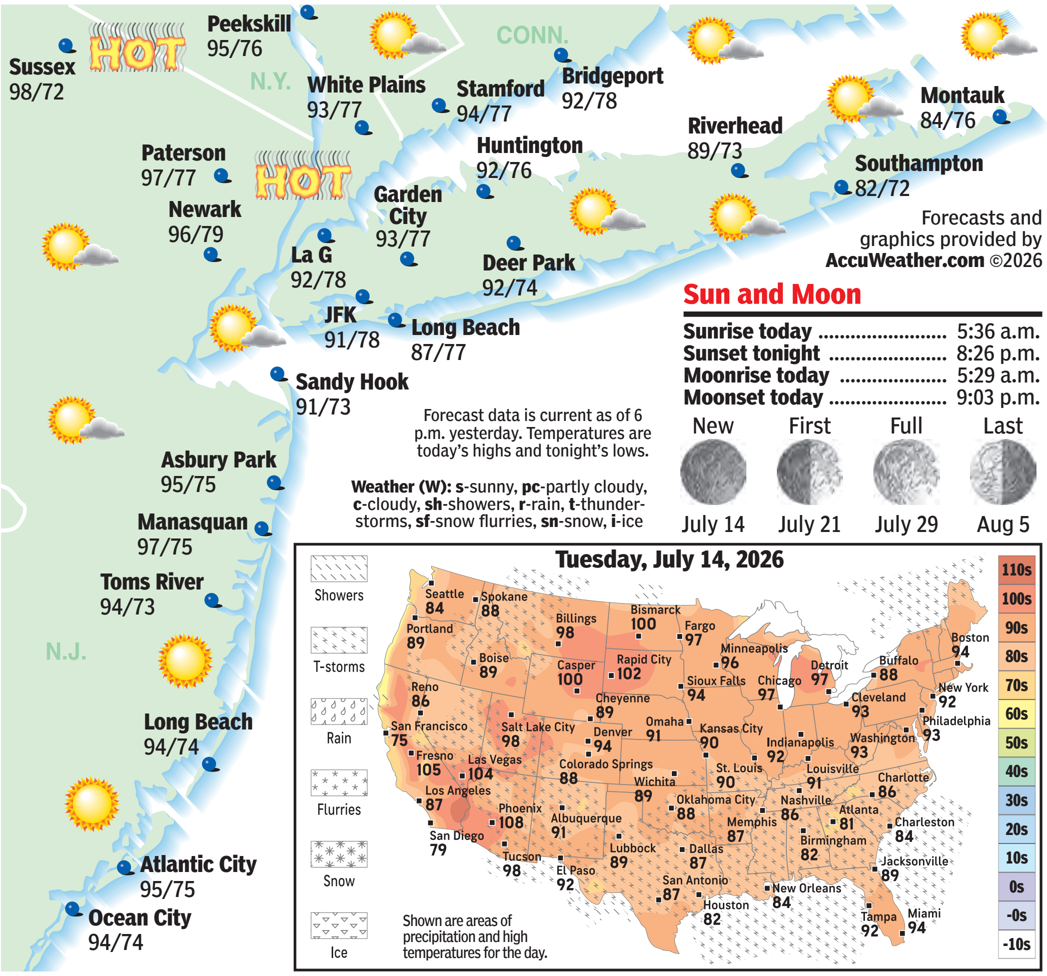
Temperature
High: 84, Low: 70, Mean: 77

Departure from Normal
Yesterday: -1 degrees

Precipitation
Yesterday: 0.00", Month: 1.56",
Year: 19.38", Normal year to date: 25.48"

Cooling Degree days yesterday 12
Total for the month (normal) 168 (159)
Total since Jan. 1 (normal) 568 (467)
Last year to date 512
Heat Index (at noon yest.) 81
UV index (for Tue.) .... 10 (Very High)
Humidity (at noon) 50%

AIR QUALITY
Pollen: Low Predominant pollen: Trees, Weeds
AQI rating: (for Tue.) .... Moderate


Sussex
98/72
HOT
Peekskill
95/76
N.Y.
CONN.
White Plains
93/77
Stamford
94/77
Bridgeport
92/78
Riverhead
89/73
Montauk
84/76
Southampton
82/72
Paterson
97/77
HOT
Newark
96/79
Garden City
93/77
Huntington
92/76
La G
92/78
Deer Park
92/74
JFK
91/78
Long Beach
87/77
Sandy Hook
91/73
Asbury Park
95/75
Manasquan
97/75
Toms River
94/73
N.J.
Long Beach
94/74
Atlantic City
95/75
Ocean City
94/74
Tuesday, July 14, 2026
Showers
T-storms
Rain
Flurries
Snow
Ice
Seattle 84
Spokane 88
Portland 89
Billings 98
Bismarck 100
Fargo 97
Boise 89
Casper 100
Rapid City 102
Minneapolis 96
Boston 94
Detroit 97
Buffalo 88
Reno 86
Sioux Falls 94
Chicago 97
New York 92
Cleveland 93
Cheyenne 89
San Francisco 75
Salt Lake City 98
Denver 94
Omaha 91
Kansas City 90
Indianapolis 92
Washington 93
Philadelphia 93
Fresno 105
Las Vegas 104
Colorado Springs 88
St. Louis 90
Louisville 91
Charlotte 86
Los Angeles 87
Wichita 89
Oklahoma City 88
Nashville 86
Atlanta 81
Phoenix 108
Albuquerque 91
Memphis 87
Charleston 84
San Diego 79
Lubbock 89
Dallas 87
Birmingham 82
Tucson 98
El Paso 92
Jacksonville 89
San Antonio 87
New Orleans 84
Houston 82
Tampa 92
Miami 94
110s
100s
90s
80s
70s
60s
50s
40s
30s
20s
10s
0s
-0s
-10s

Forecast data is current as of 6 p.m. yesterday. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.

Weather (W): s-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **r**-rain, **t**-thunderstorms, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for the day.

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather.com** ©2026

Sun and Moon

Sunrise today .... 5:36 a.m.
Sunset tonight .... 8:26 p.m.
Moonrise today .... 5:29 a.m.
Moonset today .... 9:03 p.m.

New	First	Full	Last
July 14	July 21	July 29	Aug 5

New York Tides	TODAY		TOMORROW	
High Tide for	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Coney Island	8:17a	8:35p	9:11a	9:27p
Fire Island	8:10a	8:48p	9:05a	9:38p
Hempstead	12:07p	---	12:20a	12:59p
Huntington	11:58a	---	12:14a	12:50p
Jones Inlet	8:01a	8:19p	8:55a	9:11p
Montauk Point	9:14a	9:46p	10:09a	10:38p
Port Washington	12:15p	---	12:27a	1:08p
Sandy Hook	8:21a	8:39p	9:15a	9:31p

Regional cities	TODAY	TOMORROW
Albany	98/78/pc	90/67/pc
Danbury	93/75/s	96/69/t
Glens Falls	97/74/pc	89/58/pc
Gr Barrington	97/71/s	91/60/pc
Kingston	101/74/s	96/64/pc
Liberty	93/72/s	90/62/t
Monticello	93/72/s	89/63/t
Newburgh	98/75/s	99/69/t
Poughkeepsie	98/73/s	98/65/t
Saratoga Springs	99/76/pc	94/62/pc
Stroudsburg	95/71/s	97/66/s
Torrington	94/72/s	94/63/pc
Syracuse	96/77/pc	89/67/pc

World cities	TODAY	TOMORROW
Athens	91/71/s	94/76/s
Baghdad	117/86/s	118/87/s
Beijing	94/71/c	98/74/s
Berlin	80/59/pc	81/62/s
Cairo	98/74/pc	96/75/pc
Dublin	71/58/s	72/55/s
Geneva	96/67/pc	93/63/t
Hong Kong	85/81/t	87/81/r
Jerusalem	88/67/s	89/70/s
Kabul	90/67/pc	92/69/pc
London	88/63/s	86/61/s
Madrid	99/70/s	98/72/s
Mexico City	76/55/pc	76/56/sh
Montreal	93/71/t	83/65/pc
Moscow	75/61/sh	76/61/pc
Paris	96/73/c	91/68/pc
Rio de Janeiro	71/62/pc	74/61/s
Rome	93/72/s	92/72/s
Sydney	69/51/s	63/53/sh
Tokyo	95/79/pc	94/79/c

Bx. stab slay-kin outrage

The family of a 46-year-old man who was viciously stabbed to death by a rowdy mob outside a Bronx after-hours club early Sunday wants the thugs brought to justice.

Leonardo Sanchez got into a beef with several others near East 183rd Street and Grand Concourse around 6:50 a.m., when as many as a half-dozen in the group slashed him repeatedly, leaving him mortally wounded while they sped off in several vehicles, police and sources said.

"We are absolutely looking for justice," the slain man's niece, Islen Sanchez, 26, told The Post Monday. "We want the people that are responsible found and brought to justice. They stripped us of someone who played a vital role in our family, who was cherished, absolutely loved.

"And he was taken so suddenly, so unexpectedly," she said. "We're waiting for him to come home and then not to have him show."

She said Leonardo, a Manhattan native, comes from a large family, with five siblings and two daughters.

Kevin Sheehan, Joe Marino and Jorge Fitz-Gibbon

Don shrinks Utah parks

President Trump signed orders Monday that slashed the size of two national monuments in southern Utah by more than 90% to allow for grazing, motorized recreation, logging and other resource development in the region.

The proclamations reduced the Bears Ears National Monument to 121,100 acres from 1.36 million acres, and cut the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument to 181,500 acres from 1.87 million acres.

Cuts to the monuments made by Trump in his first term were restored by President Joe Biden. *Reuters*

WireImage/Getty Images (2)

NO BURDEN: Mick Jagger (left) keeps the politics out of entertainment, unlike (clockwise) lefties Bruce Springsteen and Mark Ruffalo.

Mick-ing the right choice

KIRSTEN FLEMING

MICK Jagger gets it.

In a new sit-down with The New York Times, the 82-year-old gave a rare peek into the inner workings of being the Rolling Stones' frontman.

He is surprisingly self-aware about his tremendous ego, which he's learned to switch off when not on stage.

Jagger doesn't let it trick him into believing that fans who pay good scratch to attend his concerts want to hear his political musings — unlike Bruce Springsteen, who, on his unofficial "No Kings" tour, has been proudly fusing his greatest hits with Trump resistance storylines borrowed from the channel formerly known as MSNBC.

As the Times' David Marchese charitably put it to Jagger: "Bruce Springsteen clearly sees his job as engaging in a meaningful back and forth" — which is, in itself, a funny framing.

There's no back and forth with Springsteen, who delivers fiery political sermons from his partisan pulpit. Fans have to splash out all that money to the collection plate knowing what they'll be served in between "Hungry Heart" and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-Out."

Referencing the Jersey boy's approach, Marchese asked Jagger, "What does your relationship to the audience mean to you? What do they represent, all those people out there?"

'Don't want to lecture'

The singer gave a thoughtful answer, acknowledging that when he plays music festivals like Glastonbury or the New Orleans Jazz Fest, the crowd isn't necessarily there to see the Stones. Ultimately, he wants to put fans in a state that allows their worries to melt away.

"My job in the live-music world is for those people that come to have the best time," Jagger said, comparing it to a sporting event. "And you don't want to lecture them."

In a different era, such a sentiment would barely raise an eyebrow. It certainly wouldn't warrant a headline: "Rock legend wants to entertain the crowd, more news at 6."

However, in 2026, Jagger's declaration feels like a rejection of our current, toxic state of culture with many of our entertainers, from music to movies, believing they have a moral mandate to marinate their work in resistance slop.

His take is refreshing. Especially coming off a wild Hollywood awards season where the red carpets were a parade of anti-ICE and anti-Israel flare — and yet even that didn't satisfy legendary Spanish director Pedro Almódovar.

"There were not many protests against the war [in Gaza] or against Trump" the 76-year-old told the LA Times after the Oscars in May.

Political tribes

Somehow the lectures from Hannah Einbinder, Mark Ruffalo and Javier Bardem all award season were simply not enough.

Maybe just one more starlet declaring "f--k ICE" would make us believe what they want us to believe. These folks are completely out of touch with the real world — so much so, they don't realize that the more we have to hear them drone on, the more we tend to simply tune out. We stop buying tickets to their movies and stop watching their shows.

There are seemingly fewer and fewer entertainers who understand that. (Kevin Hart, Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Duhamel and Kevin James are rare exceptions.)

But anytime a new star tries to say maybe all this lecturing isn't a great idea, out come Hollywood's pitchforks.

Last week, Dwayne Johnson said he was planning to stay mum on politics to focus on his screen work. "Stand by Me" actor and Kamala Harris fan Wil Wheaton called him a "coward" for his decision.

Wheaton spun a good yarn on Lardass in that coming-of-age movie, but neither he nor The Rock have any bearing on my opinions on world affairs.

We live in a world where politics is always on tap: If you want it, you can find it anywhere, anytime. It dominates everything we do.

This is why we need escapism.

When entertainment becomes polluted by political discourse, it not only alienates fans. It inherently feeds division.

People stop coming together to enjoy the thing they have in common: love of the art.

There's no more communion. There's only bizarre political tribes.

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LISTEN AND FOLLOW

Plea over sex with teen boy

A Washington teacher has admitted having sex with a 16-year-old boy in a sweetheart deal that drastically cuts any time behind bars — as it emerged she is divorcing her husband, who first exposed her twisted behavior.

Mackenzie Naught, 25, had faced five years in prison after being charged with sexual misconduct with a minor for romping with the teen from a neighboring school in her truck — soon after she started her job teaching first grade at St. John Elementary School.

But the now-fired teacher pleaded guilty Friday in a deal with a maximum of 12 months in county jail, the Moscow-Pullman Daily News reported.

She was exposed when her husband, an assistant track coach at the high school where the teen studied, reported her to police after she admitted her behavior with the boy.

She initially told cops she didn't have sex with the boy — despite her confession to her husband, the Spokesman-Review reported.

But he showed screenshots from his wife's cell phone, which proved otherwise.

The ex-teacher will be on the sex offenders' registry for 10 years under the terms of her plea deal.

Chris Bradford

Tragedy on cruise ship

A crew member died after tumbling overboard from a Princess cruise ship off the coast of Cancún, according to the cruise line.

The worker who fell off the Regal Princess was discovered dead on Monday following an all-out search launched by authorities, Princess Cruises said in a statement to The Post.

It's unclear how the unidentified crew member ended up in the water off the gigantic 19-deck cruise ship that departed from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., last Saturday.

The individual's name, age, and job title were not released. *Zoe Hussain*

PROBE THE DOCTOR

INVESTIGATE: Sen. Roger Marshall (above) wants a special counsel appointed to look into Dr. Anthony Fauci and COVID-19.

Getty Images

Sen. wants fed review of Fauci's COVID role

By RYAN KING

WASHINGTON — Sen. Roger Marshall has urged the Justice Department to appoint a special counsel to investigate Dr. Anthony Fauci following the release last month of new intelligence documents related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Marshall (R-Kan.), one of four trained physicians in the Senate, argued in a Monday letter to acting Attorney General Todd Blanche that a special counsel would "avoid the appearance that the federal government is improperly reviewing its own pandemic-era misconduct."

"Specifically, the investigation should examine Dr. Fauci's role related to the origins of COVID-19, federal funding for risky coronavirus research, and the obstruction of congressional oversight," Marshall wrote.

Fauci, now 85, departed his longtime role as director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the end of 2022 after 38 years in the role. He also served as chief medical adviser to former President Joe Biden.

Pre-emptive pardon

Before departing the White House in January 2025, Biden handed Fauci a pre-emptive pardon absolving him of any and all federal offenses the doctor may have committed from Jan. 1, 2014.

On June 19, outgoing Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard released a trove of files showing that officials protected Fauci from a whistleblower complaint alleging he lied to Congress about so-called "gain of function" research conducted in Wuhan, China, after he suggested pangolins were to blame for the outbreak that has killed a reported 7.1 million people worldwide.

The documents also revealed that during a June 2021 meeting with CIA officials, Fauci redirected focus away from the now-dominant lab leak theory to a wet market in Wuhan from where some early cases emerged.

"[T]he materials raise serious questions about Dr. Fauci's role in directing or influencing the government's understanding of COVID-19's origins and about whether dissenting voices inside the federal government were sidelined or retaliated against," Marshall contended.

Republicans have repeatedly attacked Fauci over his support for gain-of-function research, which modifies pathogens to increase their potency.

Under Fauci's watch, NIAID directed grants to Manhattan nonprofit EcoHealth Alliance to study bat coronaviruses in association with the Wuhan Institute of Virology, where staffers fell ill in the fall of 2019, before COVID-19 had circulated widely.

"The pandemic imposed enormous costs on Kansas families, businesses, and communities, as well as on the entire country," Marshall concluded. "The restoration of the public's trust demands an independent investigation of federal officials' conduct before, during, and even after the pandemic."

The Justice Department and an attorney for Fauci did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

5 in family gunned down in 3 locations

Five family members were killed and two others gravely wounded in a series of "targeted" shootings in East St. Louis, Ill., on Sunday, and cops later took two teens into custody, one a relative of the victims.

The gundowns, characterized by cops as a collective "mass shooting," took place at three locations: a public housing complex, a park and another residence, police said.

The five slain were identified as Patricia May, 74; Cherie May, 49; Devin May, 24; Shania Thompson, 25; and Quentin Thompson, 21.

The wounded were not identified.

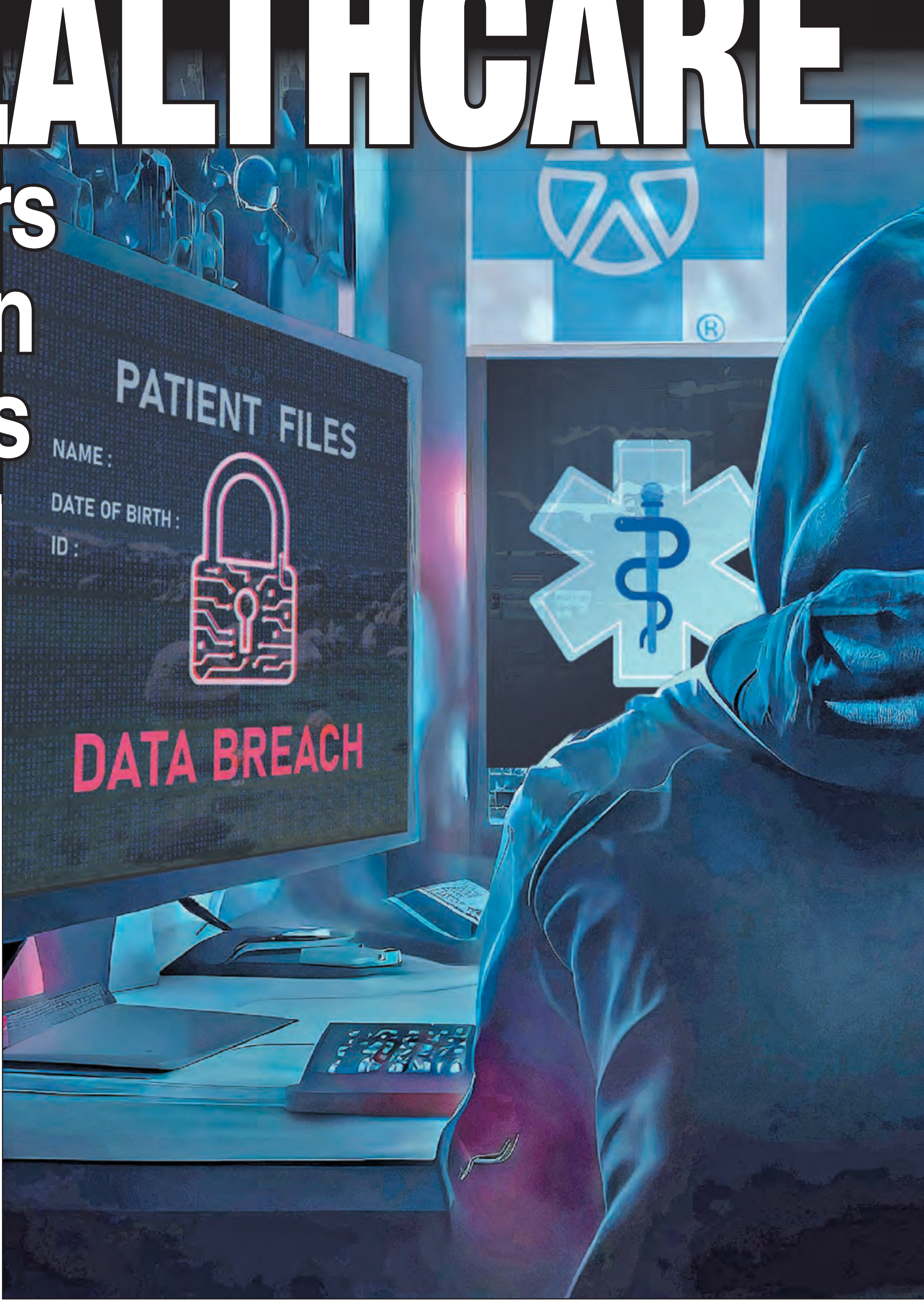
"It's terrible. It's evil. But it will not keep this city down," said State Police Director Brenden Kelly.

Two youths, 15 and 16, who police said are related, were taken into custody after a traffic stop. Kelly said one is suspected of having a direct role in the killings. Police added that one is also a relative of the victims, but did not provide additional details.

A motive has not yet been established, and no charges had been filed as of Monday morning. *Chris Nesi*

U.S. HEALTHCARE

Foreign hackers steal billions in taxpayer funds



By CHADWICK MOORE

Medicare and Medicaid are losing billions of taxpayer dollars to criminals because they can't keep pace with their high-tech scams, a Post investigation has found.

International criminal networks employ hackers who steal sensitive patient data, then sell it on the dark web or use it to then bill for fake medical equipment or services in people's names.

Scammers even use AI voice bots to coax info out of seniors on the phone, posing as US healthcare workers, often from thousands of miles away in Europe or Asia.

They use the same techniques on the insurance companies, with one Philippines-based outfit going as far as training AI bots to speak like American old folks when insurance companies called about suspicious claims, according to feds.

"The fraud schemes I'm seeing — it blows me away. It's frightening how sophisticated these things have become," Gordon Schnell, a partner in the healthcare-fraud whistleblower law firm Constantine Cannon, told The Post.

"The scale of the money that CMS [Centers for Medicaid and Medicare] doles out every year is enormous. Even if they lose sight of a relatively small percentage of it, it's still billions of dollars."

In a March 2026 report to CMS, cybersecurity company Pindrop detailed how fraudsters use cloned voices to authorize transactions, working "at machine speed."

AI-enabled campaigns deploy automated voice bots to probe Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems — those automated telephone menus whenever you call a large company or a government agency — to test security and then escalate to a human agent, where they attempt to trick the human agent into releasing account data.

"Synthetic identities built from breached data are used to establish coverage under fraudulent pretenses, or to fabricate consumer consent," the report found.

Last month, The Post reported on a jaw-dropping "phantom catheter" scam in which the Russian mob made off with $1 billion.

Incredibly, the mobsters had allegedly been able to purchase 30 medical supply companies across the US that were already enrolled as Medicare providers, then used them to fraudulently bill Medicare. The mobsters attempted to bill $10 billion, mostly for urinary catheters, using the stolen patient data of over 1 million Americans, triggering 400,000 complaints, according to prosecutors.

Overseas laundering

The scheme was brazen, and most of the fake reimbursements were blocked, but not before gangsters had laundered huge amounts through banks in Israel, Turkey and China, prosecutors charge.

The change in ownership of a Medicare provider usually triggers a site visit, but CMS was unaware of the Russian business purchases because the gangsters — who sent patsies from Russia and Estonia to pick up physical checks in the US — didn't alert the agency and kept the old owners' names and bank accounts around for as long as possible, according to the indictment.

In several cases, when CMS caught on and stopped paying shady companies, private supplemental insurance companies, known broadly as Medigap, instead continued paying and kept the scam alive longer, according to several indictments.

In June, the DOJ announced charges against Ibrahim Khaldoon Hilmi, who was allegedly running an offshore Medicare fraud scheme, also involving US medical supplies. He was apprehended in Cyprus and now faces federal healthcare fraud and money laundering conspiracy charges in Florida.

Prosecutors say through his Sunshine Senior urinary catheter company, Hilmi was able to pocket $5.7 million in taxpayer money. It's unclear if any of that has been recovered. Hilmi has yet to enter a plea.

Also last month, Herbert Leon Kimble was nabbed at a casino in Pasig City, Philippines, for orchestrating an attempted $1.2 billion Medicare fraud scheme using a Philippine call center to generate fake orthopedic brace prescriptions.

He had previously pleaded guilty, but then fled the country in 2022 after prosecutors recommended probation and a $40 million restitution payment.

'Systems set up'

Meanwhile, charges were filed in the Northern District of Illinois against five defendants in 2025, including two owners of Pakistani marketing companies, in connection with a scheme in which Medicare ID numbers

LOSING ‘BOT’TLE

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were allegedly obtained via deceptive marketing.

Through hacking, scraping websites, and deceptive “free product” websites, the defendants allegedly illegally obtained large numbers of real Medicare patients’ ID numbers, which they sold for $31 million to their own fake medical supply companies, according to prosecutors.

The scam included using artificial intelligence to create fake recordings of patients consenting to receive medical supplies, and the outfit made off with $419 million out of $700 million they billed for.

Another Pakistani scammer who owned a billing company was busted that year in a kickback scheme collaborating with at least 41 drug treatment centers in Arizona to fraudulently bill for substance abuse treatment services that were never provided, or substandard to requirements. Prosecutors say the defendant used some of his $25 million proceeds to purchase a $3 million home on a golf course in Dubai.

None of the defendants has yet to enter a plea.

According to CMS, 1.3 million Americans were issued new Medicare beneficiary numbers this spring in a fraud prevention effort.

Most of these criminals never actually set foot in the US themselves.

To obtain businesses, foreign-based gangsters use virtual private servers (VPSs) to hide their true physical locations while communicating with sellers and digitally signing purchase documents, meaning the ease and interconnectivity of the modern world worked to their advantage.

They may also use a US-based corporate proxy, referred to in indictments as a “Registered Agent Company” to file paperwork on their behalf.

“It may be that it’s just one of many criminal enterprises in which these foreign cartels engage in and may be actually easier because it doesn’t involve smuggling or moving around products. It’s clean. It’s all paperwork-oriented and you can do it remotely,” said Schnell.

“[Gangs] already have systems set up for laundering illicit proceeds. So that’s why you’re seeing a trend. But by no means are [foreign networks] the dominant bad actors in this space,” he added, noting domestic fraudsters account for the vast majority of the $186 billion in improper Medicare and Medicaid payments nationwide, a figure estimated by the nonprofit Government Accountability Office.

US citizenship is not required to start or buy many businesses, even medical providers. In fact, even people who are in the US illegally are still lawfully allowed to purchase and own American companies in all 50 states, an intentional part of business codes designed to encourage foreign investment.

However, the system does not differentiate between a Saudi billionaire investor, for example, and the army of 20-something Estonians who feds say were sent to the US on tourist visas and became nominee “owners” of the 30 medical supply companies in the Russian mob operation.

URINE TROUBLE: Ibrahim Khaldoon Hilmi (left) allegedly stole $5.7 million in US taxpayer funds through an offshore Medicare scam involving US medical supplies and his urinary catheter company.

‘Crypto a big part’

According to indictments, the scams often relied on US-based bank tellers who were friendly with the fraudsters to assist in opening accounts and looking the other way on shady transactions.

“Crypto seems to be a big part of it because it’s so easily transferable,” said Schnell. “One of our cases involved government payments sent through various money transfer platforms [such as Venmo or PayPal] that were immediately withdrawn and converted into crypto. Once it’s in crypto, it can be moved much more easily.”

Requiring increased paperwork was once a bulwark against fraud, but Schnell says that no longer seems to be the case.

“Everything is so tied into automation and AI that I’m not sure the paperwork burden is what it used to be,” he said.

cmoore@nypost.com

Cuban hijacker sprung

Released from ICE by judge

By ALEX DIAZ

MIAMI — A criminal who hijacked a plane from Cuba to Florida in 2003 and served more than two decades in prison had been in ICE custody awaiting deportation — until a Dem-appointed judge dumped him back on the street last week.

Cuban national Miakel Guerra Morales — who assaulted crew members during his terrifying midair hijacking — was detained by ICE in December, then ordered freed July 8 by Florida Judge John E. Steele, who said he'd been in custody too long.

The Department of Homeland Security on Monday railed against the Bill Clinton-nominated federal judge's decision to release Guerra Morales.

"This activist judge forced ICE to release a criminal illegal alien who was convicted and sentenced to 22 years for hijacking a plane back into American communities," DHS Acting Assistant Secretary Lauren Bis raged in a statement.

Flew to Key West

"This is yet another example of an activist judge trying to thwart President Trump's mandate from the American people to remove criminal illegal aliens from our country," she said.

Telemundo 51 Miami

AWAY: Miakel Guerra Morales (center) reunites with his mother (right) and older brother after more than two decades in federal prison and seven months in ICE detention.

Guerra Morales was among at least a dozen Cuban nationals who boarded a commuter plane in Nueva Gerona, Cuba, on March 19, 2003.

He ended up assaulting its crew members and forcing the pilot to fly to Key West, according to the order for his release from ICE detention.

Guerra Morales was eventually arrested by the US Marshals Service and convicted of aircraft piracy and conspiracy to interfere with a flight crew and sentenced to 22 years behind bars.

He appears to have served at least 20 years in prison, documents said.

ICE took him into custody in December 2025, but Judge Steele ordered him released under supervision again.

Don IRS suit void by judge

A judge on Monday found that President Trump improperly used a $10 billion lawsuit he filed against the IRS to extract personal benefits from the government he oversees, preventing the terms of a settlement agreement from taking legal effect.

Miami-based US District Judge Kathleen Williams excoriated Trump's personal lawyers and attorneys in his administration, concluding their interests were not opposed to each other as is legally required for civil lawsuits. Williams referred a Trump lawyer in the case, Alejandro Brito, and senior Justice Department officials who signed off on the settlement to state bar authorities to determine if their actions violated legal ethics rules.

The settlement brokered in May led Trump to drop the suit in exchange for sweeping tax protections and the creation of a nearly $1.8 billion fund for victims of so-called government weaponization. *Reuters*

Sally Brompton Daily Horoscope

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♋ CANCER
(June 22-July 23)

Today's new moon in your sign is the starting gun for the rest of the year. Ready, steady, get going! Forget about what went before and focus on the great things you intend to do between now and the end of the year.

♌ LEO
(July 24-Aug. 23)

If some rather strange thoughts come into your head today, don't try to chase them away, because most likely it is your subconscious mind trying to nudge you in a new direction. The inside you knows what the outside you needs most.

♍ VIRGO
(Aug. 24-Sept. 23)

Something you have secretly desired for ages will come tantalizingly close to reality over the next few days. You may feel that you do not deserve to possess it but in fact no one deserves it more — so reach out and make it your own.

♎ LIBRA
(Sept. 24-Oct. 23)

What occurs over the next two or three days won't just change your life but will actually transform it. If you can maintain a positive outlook on what's going on in the world you will be one of the few to profit from coming upheavals.

♏ SCORPIO
(Oct. 24-Nov. 22)

There is no such thing as a perfect day, but today's new moon in the most adventurous area of your chart means this one will come closer than most. Whatever your dream may be you can and you must go for it now with total self-belief.

♐ SAGITTARIUS
(Nov. 23 - Dec. 21)

The more you try to ignore what is going on around you, the more it will insinuate its way into your thoughts, so you might as well face it head-on. The world needs people who are not afraid to take difficult decisions. The world needs you.

♑ CAPRICORN
(Dec. 22 - Jan. 20)

If you keep telling yourself that current events, even the ones you don't enjoy, are going to be to your benefit, you will feel a lot happier about facing the day. Be strong, be decisive and be the one who isn't scared to make things happen.

♒ AQUARIUS
(Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)

What occurs over the next 24 hours will help you understand why certain people have been acting in ways that don't seem to make sense. Most likely it's you who have missed the signs and need to bring your plans and your methods up to date.

♓ PISCES
(Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Your energy will be on a different level today, thanks to the new moon in the most dynamic area of your chart. If you make each and every minute count now, the weeks and months to come will bring opportunities you cannot as yet imagine.

♈ ARIES
(March 21-April 20)

You must trust your instincts today, especially when dealing with partnership issues and family matters. The new moon will make it easy for you to tune in to other people's feelings so you can judge what is good for everyone, not just yourself.

♉ TAURUS
(April 21-May 21)

You will be on the move constantly today, but will you actually get a lot done or will you waste time on trivial pursuits? Focus on the two or three objectives that mean the most to you personally and ignore everything else.

♊ GEMINI
(May 22-June 21)

No matter how stormy your life has been in recent days, what occurs over the next 24 hours will bring some degree of calm. That in turn will give you the room you need to think clearly and come up with solutions to a financial problem.

BIRTHDAY TUESDAY

You need to see the new moon on your birthday as a cosmic invitation to push beyond your current limits and create a set of life rules that give you more freedom to achieve and explore. Anything is possible now if you want it enough.

HUNTER BIDEN
Interview with Nick Fuentes.

Hunter sits with a bigot

Hunter Biden stooped to a new low on Sunday when he sat down with notorious antisemitic streamer Nick Fuentes as part of the disgraced former first son's shameless media blitz.

Former President Joe Biden's scandal-scarred son and the white nationalist nearly "came to blows" during their "explosive" conversation on YouTuber Andrew Callaghan's "Channel 5" show, TMZ reported Monday.

The interview, taped in a Philadelphia motel room, will air later this month, according to the outlet.

Callaghan, who apparently had to step in to keep Hunter and Fuentes from physically fighting, reportedly sought to find out if the odd couple could "find common ground" during the "no question off limits" discussion.

Hunter has sought to rehabilitate his image in the wake of influence peddling, drug, gun and tax evasion scandals. *Victor Nava*

Zel: We need 'Patriots'

President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed Monday an agreement with Ukraine's European allies on a European-backed anti-ballistic system as an alternative to the US Patriot system, but said Kyiv needed Patriot interceptors for now and the coming winter.

"One of the main ways to strengthen our collective position should be a winter package of air defense missiles," he wrote on Telegram. "This package should include 100 Patriot missiles per month, 300 missiles for the winter." *Reuters*

COBRA TEAM / BACKGRID (2)

Another ring for Knicks guard?

Knicks reserve guard Landry Shamet — fresh off an NBA championship and a new four-year, $24 million deal — takes in Italy's Amalfi Coast with girlfriend Cameron Aimonetti, who was spotted Sunday wearing some new jewelry on her ring finger.

A REAL LONG SHOT

US men think they can nail a penalty

By CHRIS NESI

The World Cup on US soil apparently has American men thinking rather highly of their soccer abilities — with nearly a quarter of them saying they were confident they could "definitely or probably" score on a penalty kick in a World Cup match.

The YouGov poll quizzed American men and women across several age cohorts — and even political affiliations — and the findings were interesting.

Overall, approximately one in five (19%) of US adults believed they could score on a penalty kick, where the ball is positioned 12 yards from the goal line — with 15% of women and 24% of men saying they could pull it off.

Those answering in the affirmative were most densely concentrated among those in the 18-29 age bracket, where a whopping 41% of men said they would score if given the chance.

Pros not perfect

Meanwhile, around a quarter (23%) of women in that age group said the same.

Among respondents aged 30-44, 32% of men and 19% of women expressed confidence in their ability to sneak a penalty shot past the goalie.

The numbers trail off significantly from there, with just 18% of men and 10% of women in the 45-64 cohort making the audacious claim — and bottoming out in the 65-and-over bracket, where just 11% of men and 6% of women believe they could score.

Professional-level athletes typically convert 71-79% of penalties, according to a study published in the British science journal Nature.

When it comes to the YouGov survey, major differences came to the fore when the research company put the same question to people by political affiliation — with 58% of Republican men under 45 believing they could score on a penalty kick, compared to just 28% of Democratic men and 26% of independent men of the same age.

The inflated sense of soccer skills among Republicans carried over to women, with 34% of GOP women under 45 asserting they could do the deed, compared to 21% of young Democratic women and just 14% of Independents.

YouGov points out that there were no statistically significant differences within the same groups in the 45-and-over age bracket.

The survey was conducted online July 9-10, polling 6,297 US adults and with a margin of error of approximately 1.5%.

PRIVILEGED 'VIEW'

ABC via Getty Images

IT TRACKS: "The View" co-host Sunny Hostin (left) defended her son Gabriel (right) after he allegedly trespassed on railroad tracks and dropped her famous name to cops.

Son drops Sun's name to police

By LARRY CELONA
and JORGE FITZ-GIBBON

"The View" co-host Sunny Hostin's son was nabbed trespassing on Metro-North Railroad tracks in Westchester County — and wasted no time dropping his famous mom's name, The Post has learned.

Gabriel Hostin, 24, was spotted jogging along MTA tracks in New Rochelle on June 16, ignoring "no trespassing" signs and giving lip to cops when they questioned him, sources said Monday.

"They were just talking to the kid because he was trespassing, but his mother made it an issue," the sources said. "She wanted to know why he was stopped and why did they talk to him."

According to the sources, cops then got on the phone with the TV personality from the hit ABC talk show, who allegedly asked if they knew who she was.

"She said, 'I am Sunny Hostin, I am on 'The View,' " the source claimed she answered.

Sunny's his lawyer

The sources said the path along the tracks typically raises suicide concerns for MTA cops, but there is no indication that Gabriel Hostin was attempting to harm himself.

Court records show that Gabriel Hostin was stopped shortly before 8 p.m. on June 16 near 24 Station Plaza in the suburban city after he was spotted "on the right-of-way of the active railroad tracks, in violation of the posted no trespassing signs."

The Harvard University grad was cited for a trespassing violation and is due back in New Rochelle court on July 31.

Sunny Hostin, a former federal prosecutor who is listed as her son's attorney, declined to comment when reached by phone on Monday.

But in a letter obtained by TMZ, the talk show host defended her son's actions to Westchester Assistant District Attorney Amanda Greene, the prosecutor on her son's case.

"When jogging, he observed what appeared to be a gravel incline that could be used for hill training," Sunny Hostin wrote.

"Although there was a gate at the entrance of the gravel incline, the gates were standing open," Hostin added.

"The only 'No Trespassing' sign was affixed to the left gate and, because the gates were open, it was not visible to my client as he entered the property," she claimed.

lcelona@nypost.com

Pentagon puts pin in cyber assess

The Pentagon is suspending the next phase of a cybersecurity certification program for defense contractors, backing off a compliance requirement that industry executives had warned was pushing small suppliers out of military work and narrowing competition in the defense supply chain.

The Defense Department's long-delayed US Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification began in November 2025 and aims to protect sensitive information, known as controlled unclassified information.

The Phase 2 rollout of the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification, which was to have taken effect Nov. 10 of this year, will be paused immediately, the department said.

Program offices will for now require only Level 1 or Level 2 self-assessments rather than the third-party audits Phase 2 would have mandated.

The move follows months of complaints from small and mid-sized aerospace and defense suppliers, some of whom told Reuters earlier this year that compliance costs were running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. They said this, combined with long waits for third-party audits, was prompting them to reconsider defense work altogether.

Industry lawyers had also warned the rules risked squeezing out lower-tier suppliers and complicating business for international companies juggling competing data-privacy standards.

Reuters

Parasite sickens 17 on LI

The notorious "explosive diarrhea" parasite has infected 17 people on Long Island — while a salmonella outbreak possibly tied to a music concert has hospitalized nearly 60 people, officials said Monday.

Nassau County's Health Department locations have confirmed multiple cases of cyclosporiasis, linked to imported produce, that strikes its victims with rabid diarrhea that can last more than a month. There were 11 cases in June alone, the department said.

The 17 confirmed cases is an uptick of the 10 cases reported over the same period last year.

A salmonella outbreak on the East End in Suffolk County may have originated at last month's Palm Tree Music Festival on a Native American reservation, according to sources and officials. *Brandon Cruz*

W'chester 'fed' a fibber: cops

A Westchester dogwalker was arrested at Rye Playland for allegedly impersonating an FBI agent, months after he was busted for falsely reporting that he was shot, according to cops.

While hanging around the amusement park on July 4, John Fiore, 47, was sporting an FBI badge on his waist and telling passersbys he was a federal agent who'd been injured in the line of duty, police told Mid Hudson News.

When two Westchester County cops checked up on him, police said, a park employee handed them Fiore's business card for a dog-walking service.

Investigators found he had been charged in May with lying to cops by saying that he'd been shot in the knee, only for them to find out it was a fabricated report, police said.

David DeTurris

Slumlord No. 1

Proof that Zoh's housing dream is a nightmare

BLOCK by BLOCK

Gregory P. Mango

Hypocrite: Mamdani damns landlords, but city-run buildings are a mess.

JOHN KETCHAM

WANT to make banker money without stepping foot on Wall Street? Try plumbing for the New York City Housing Authority.

From July 2024 through June 2025, NYCHA plumber supervisor Jakub Markowski earned $465,000, including $332,000 for nearly 2,600 hours in overtime — more than the mayor and City Council speaker make combined. While he collected these checks, Markowski also operated two private plumbing companies. The Buildings Department is now investigating him.

As the city's ascendant socialist left pushes for more housing in public or nonprofit hands, NYCHA's history presents a sordid tale of dysfunction and corruption, with Markowski the latest apparent example.

Lest we forget, Shola Olatoye, NYCHA's chairwoman under Mayor Bill de Blasio, lied for years under oath to the federal government about nonexistent lead-paint inspections and other safety failures. As part of the feds' settlement with the city, since January 2019, an independent monitor has been in place to oversee NYCHA's compliance.

Yet federal oversight has not stopped the rot. In 2024, Damien Williams, the Biden-appointed US attorney for the Southern District of New York, charged 70 NYCHA current and former employees with bribery and extortion. The takedown represented the largest number of bribery charges brought in a single day in the Justice Department's history. All 70 pleaded guilty or were convicted.

Nor has public ownership delivered livable conditions for tenants. In fact, they're bad enough to qualify as a moral stain on this city. On July 6, the federal monitor released its latest quarterly report. Despite modest progress, it shows that NYCHA buildings are riddled with hazards.

For example, under the federal agreement, NYCHA is supposed to ensure that no more than 15% of mold complaints involve visible mold of 10 square feet or more. In the latest report, 86% did.

Without acknowledging why city government has long proved such a poor landlord, Democratic Socialists want to put even more housing under public or nonprofit control, in the name of affordability. The far left has not shown why NYCHA is a success story in disguise, or why new public housing wouldn't devolve into similar dysfunction. Instead, they fall back on the claim that NYCHA is underfunded.

About 80% of NYCHA buildings are 50 years old or more, well past most buildings' useful lives. Rents cannot rise to support an estimated $80 billion in backlogged repairs and capital needs.

The system has thus grown more dependent on taxpayer-funded city subsidies. NYCHA's capital expenditures on capital improvements increased 48% between 2021 and 2025, to $1.2 billion per year, with most new money coming from city and state sources.

One big reason for NYCHA's recent financial distress is that more tenants aren't paying their rent. NYCHA collected only 68.6% of its anticipated rent in fiscal 2025, down sharply from 89.6% six years earlier.

And it's not because their rents are too high. NYCHA households' rents average $621 per month, capped at 30% of household gross income.

Only 38.4% of NYCHA families are employed, and the average income of a NYCHA household was $26,129. Sadly, they're trapped by the system's disincentives to work and earn more, a broken public-education system and the lack of new housing supply.

Meanwhile, it costs NYCHA $1,419 per month on average to operate and barely maintain each unit. Despite 165,000 families waiting to enter, NYCHA has just 6,740 vacant units and takes an average of 371 days to turn one around.

By contrast, the private sector maintains pre-1974 rent-stabilized housing at an average cost of $1,192 per month. In buildings entirely composed of stabilized units, that figure is $1,037— about 27% less than NYCHA's average.

Even with supposedly strict processes that aim to prevent favoritism, kickbacks and self-dealing, people will find ways to work the system. Free, competitive markets reduce corruption because they leave government officials with fewer opportunities to intervene.

The private sector should simply build and operate much more housing in New York. Private owners can't afford to pay their plumbers $465,000 because they need to stay in business and can't raise taxes.

Instead, NYCHA will just keep failing — and asking taxpayers to keep funding six-figure overtime rides on its gravy train.

John Ketcham is director of cities and a legal policy fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

FAST TAKES

Eye on hate: Dems Now the Chief Antisemites

"If I'd told you in 2015 that the focal point of antisemitic sentiment in the U.S. in 2026 would be inside the Democratic Party, you would have thought I was insane," posits John Podhoretz at The Free Press. Back then, it was the right attacking Jewish conservatives, unleashing a variety of antisemitic attacks. Yet President Trump "became the most pro-Israel president in American history," and "in the real world of politics, policy, and protests, outside of the realm of X posts," all "the roiling turmoil on Jewish issues has come from the left." Why? Trump has a "fingertip feel for what the people who love him want to hear from him," and "Republicans overall remain overwhelmingly supportive of Israel and sympathetic to Jewish concerns," so "the philosemitic, pro-Israel path of Trump II is the result of a dynamic interplay between the president and his base" — his *real* base, not the cranks now "talking about starting a third party."

Trafficking beat: Close the Surrogacy Loopholes

US law lets rich Chinese nationals "mail-order American babies for a vial of semen and a lot of cash," thunders the Federalist's Nathanael Blake. Video-game mogul Xu Bo has 100 children born through American surrogates; his ilk, are spending up to $200,000 per child to forge "an unstoppable family dynasty," The Wall Street Journal reports. Team Trump must "treat this as the human trafficking and national security threat that it is, and shut it down. We put export controls on all sorts of things; we should add American infants to the list. Making America Great Again means not selling American babies."

Feminist: Amnesty International vs. Women

Amnesty International "once presented itself as the conscience of the free world" and a "champion of dissidents and those who stood up to authoritarian power," recalls Jo Bartosch at Spiked, but now "resembles the very forces it was created to oppose." It has embraced the logic of "trans tyranny," claiming that people who believe "sex-based rights are worth defending" are actually part of an "anti-rights ecosystem" that threatens "the safety of women and LGBT+ people." A recent, quickly deleted Amnesty report had "the unfortunate optics of compiling lists of ideological enemies" who support the time-tested idea "that human beings are either male or female, that sex cannot be changed, and that the physical differences between the sexes matter."

Olympics watch: Putin's War Disqualifies Russia

Vladimir Putin

"Russia is one step closer to full participation in the next Olympics," fret David J. Kramer & Elizabeth Kennedy Trudeau at The Hill, "after the International Olympic Committee voted Tuesday to lift the 2023 suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee," imposed after Putin's invasion of Ukraine. With war still raging, IOC vote "undermines everything the Olympics purports to represent." Russian bombs have "destroyed more than 800 sports facilities, including 20 Olympic, Paralympic and Deaflympic training centers" and "killed 660 Ukrainian athletes and coaches." Letting Moscow "return to the Olympic stage" violates the "opening principles of the Olympic Charter," which "place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind" to promote "a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity."

Conservative: World Ignores Cuba's Pain

Despite the "courage of so many" to protest "against the Cuban military dictatorship," the "international community still refuses to denounce" the regime, laments The Wall Street Journal's Mary Anastasia O'Grady. Instead, the United Nations recently voted "to open debate on U.S. sanctions." Cubans need a "leg up from the outside," but that "won't happen until countries put aside their obsession with thwarting the Americans." The regime holds "800 political prisoners" and tries to silence dissent by "death, imprisonment or exile." And as the United States seeks to end Cuba's "immense human-trafficking network" of doctors and nurses forced to work overseas for the regime's profit, critics "suggest that Washington is denying healthcare to the needy." "History will not absolve" these countries for ignoring "crimes against humanity."

— Compiled by The Post Editorial Board

NEW YORK POST
America's oldest continuously published daily newspaper

Win the Battle of Hormuz

President Trump has rightly declared the Iran "cease-fire" to be dead and even more rightly made getting the Strait of Hormuz permanently opened his top priority.

All his minions should get the message: Win the Battle of Hormuz. Use all the force it takes; anything diplomacy can do (and we don't see much) is just an added plus.

Tehran's proved its promises mean nothing: No sooner had the prez threatened serious consequences if Iran failed to declare the Strait of Hormuz open than it defiantly attacked a civilian ship and declared it closed.

But let's be clear here: The goal is to enforce the right to free navigation of international waters. That is, safe passage for commercial ships and no tolls by anyone, including the United States.

Tehran is claiming it owns the Strait. Iran's leaders (i.e., the ones controlling the missiles and drones that threaten shipping) see control of the waterway, with tolls, as a way to wring victory from the jaws of defeat.

Yet the prime purpose of the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding was to get the Strait open while US negotiators finalized Iran's supposed concessions — above all, a verifiable end to its pursuit of nukes. Now that the regime's shown it has no intention of ever opening the Strait (nor giving an inch on nukes), it's abundantly clear the MoU was a sucker's game.

The world depends on the Strait for more than 20% of its oil; its closure strangles global economic growth and plagues US consumers even if our economy still grows.

More important is the principle: No power grabs allowed over *any* international waterway. Freedom of navigation has served the world well for centuries, and serves the Free World far better than any other arrangement.

It's great that Trump declared the "U.S.A. will be, from this point forward, known as 'THE GUARDIAN OF THE HORMUZ STRAIT'." But his vow that Washington will "be reimbursed, at the rate of 20% on all cargo shipped," to cover US costs would make our country a *capo* instead of a cop.

Yes, other nations should share the burden, but, again: Freedom of navigation means no tolls, period. Otherwise, regional powers will move on *every* global chokepoint — and the civilized world will lose the most.

Restored sanctions, a renewed blockade of Iran's ports and fresh airstrikes are a decent start. Next, the United States must step up attacks — forget the limited "tit for tat" strikes; hit whatever regime targets are needed to pull Tehran's fangs. Maybe take Kharg Island . . . and why not start seizing Iranian tankers?

If Iran wants a deal, it must agree to a permanently open the Strait before any other talks proceed. Tehran's words are meaningless until its actions prove it's admitting defeat.

Ro Khanna's Pathetic Posturing

Rep. Ro Khanna's latest showboating stunt is too much even for other Democratic electeds — not only a transparent ploy to get past his all-in bet on the Graham Platner campaign, but a transparently pathetic bid to play victim of those darn Israelis.

Just days after his scorched-earth defense of the Maine Senate candidate failed to stop the implosion, Khanna (D-Calif.) rushed off to the Middle East to change his storyline.

He headed to the West Bank, intentionally directing his entourage into a restricted zone, then pretended he'd been taken hostage by Israeli "settlers" run amok.

In reality, he was briefly stopped by local security; after the army checked out his story he was free to proceed on his inane "fact-finding" mission.

Khanna's whining that it's "unprecedented" and "illegal" for an "American citizen" to be stopped this way is absurd, the ultimate entitled "ugly American" behavior. He's also claiming he was stopped for being "brown": Nonsense, as many Palestinians are fair-skinned and many Israelis dark-skinned.

More posturing: Having staged his "victimhood" in front of a New York Times photographer, he then talked up his presidential ambitions, pretending to warn Israelis that he might soon be running the world. Hah! He's even more of a joke than Kamala Harris.

Even other progressives are sick of this self-promoting phony populist, perhaps the wealthiest Democrat in Congress.

This pustule on the rear end of our democracy will surely pop eventually. The real shame is that we have to put up with his camera-hogging as we wait for it to happen.

The City Council Shows Its Contempt

It's a move obscene on so many levels: Members of the City Council are looking to vote themselves a fat pay hike.

Just days after approving a gargantuan $126 billion city budget, they took up a measure to boost their salaries more than 18% retroactive to Jan. 1 — *plus* automatic 2% hikes thereafter.

This would push their pay to $175,500, more than twice the city's median income, showing complete contempt for city voters, who the pols plainly think won't notice.

Shame on the *supposed* good-government groups claiming the hike will attract better candidates. The council gave itself $30,000 raises in 2016 with no sign of improvement; Los Angeles and Chicago pay their councils more — and are worse disasters than Gotham.

The City Charter requires the convening of a pay panel every four years — during the *third year* of a mayoral term — to prevent immediate conflicts of interest.

If Speaker Julie Menin means to be seen as a real leader, she can't just announce she won't take the raise: She needs to refuse to allow a floor vote on this outrage, or she's saying she, too, holds regular New Yorkers in complete contempt.

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letters@nypost.com

RIP Sen. Lindsey Graham: A True 'America First' Man

THE ISSUE: The death of Sen. Lindsey Graham, a prominent voice for freedom and US strength.

Lindsey Graham

•Sen. Lindsey Graham was hated by the left because he loved America unreservedly, saw the threats to it clearly and was courageous and smart enough to know how those threats needed to be combatted ("Sen.'s sudden death shock," July 13).

The senator's visits to Ukraine in the teeth of the obscene war started by the madman Vladimir Putin, and his unstinting support of Israel in the face of its genocidal enemies, showed him to be a lover of justice and democracy.

His heart knew no boundaries, always keeping America and South Carolina first and foremost in his sights. His death is a loss that will be felt for as long as people cherish America and freedom.

David Rabinovitz
Brooklyn

•Graham has died and one of President Trump's biggest boosters is no more. It seems so ironic to wish him eternal peace when his greatest claim to fame is as the "War Whisperer."

Bob Ory, Chicago, Ill.

•Lindsey Graham was a noble warrior who put America's welfare ahead of his own personal station in life.

A morally upright man, his clarity of vision allowed him to easily recognize right from wrong and good over evil. That is why he championed Israel over the antisemites and Ukraine over Russia.

Rest in peace, sir. You earned your rightful place in heaven.

Gerald Jacobs
Boca Raton, Fla.

•As the poet John Donne said nearly 400 years ago, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." He is saying we are all connected, and the death of one diminishes the lives of all.

Sadly, politics have separated us from that fundamental truth. The near-joy expressed by many at Lindsey Graham's death is truly disturbing. It's not just disrespectful.

There's a reason why it's wrong to speak ill of the dead. It's cowardly. The deceased can't even defend themselves.

Albert DeSimone Jr.
Bishop, Ga.

•I am deeply shocked and saddened to learn of Lindsey Graham's passing, one of the last neoconservatives in the post-Bush era, who has stood for nearly every principle I believe in.

For decades I marveled at how, when other neocons stood firm in their principles and accepted exile from power, Graham bent with the wind to accommodate and explain changing democratic fortunes, keeping one last haymaker in reserve. I will miss him.

Jorge Sierra, The Bronx

•Graham will be remembered as a DC legend chock-full of personality. He was a one-of-a-kind orator with a fiery brand and fought every day for Americans with his unrelenting fervor.

His small-town upbringing made him relatable to ordinary Americans with his quirky antics. He never held back on speaking his mind.

He will remain one of the rare few who notably left their mark on Washington. America and only America was his agenda.

Ronald Frank
West Orange, NJ

•Graham, like Trump, was always looking for another war to start and another country to bomb to smithereens. Now that Graham has died, Trump says we should fly our flags at half-mast.

We are living in a twisted moment in American history. Hopefully, this will begin to change come the midterms.

Kreg Ramone
Manhattan

•A bright light has gone out, but his work remains. Sen. Lindsey Graham was more than a politician and lawyer — he was a champion for the vulnerable and a defender of our shared ideals. He believed that the strength of our country is found in its fairness and kindness toward everyone.

He left us too soon, but he proved that one person standing up for what is right can change the world for the better. Rest in peace, senator.

Thomas De Julio
Delray Beach, Fla.

•Have these people cheering for Graham's death no shame? It only shows their true colors.

People like them are never happy and live a hateful existence. You actually have to feel sorry for them.

P. Fletcher
Massappequa Park

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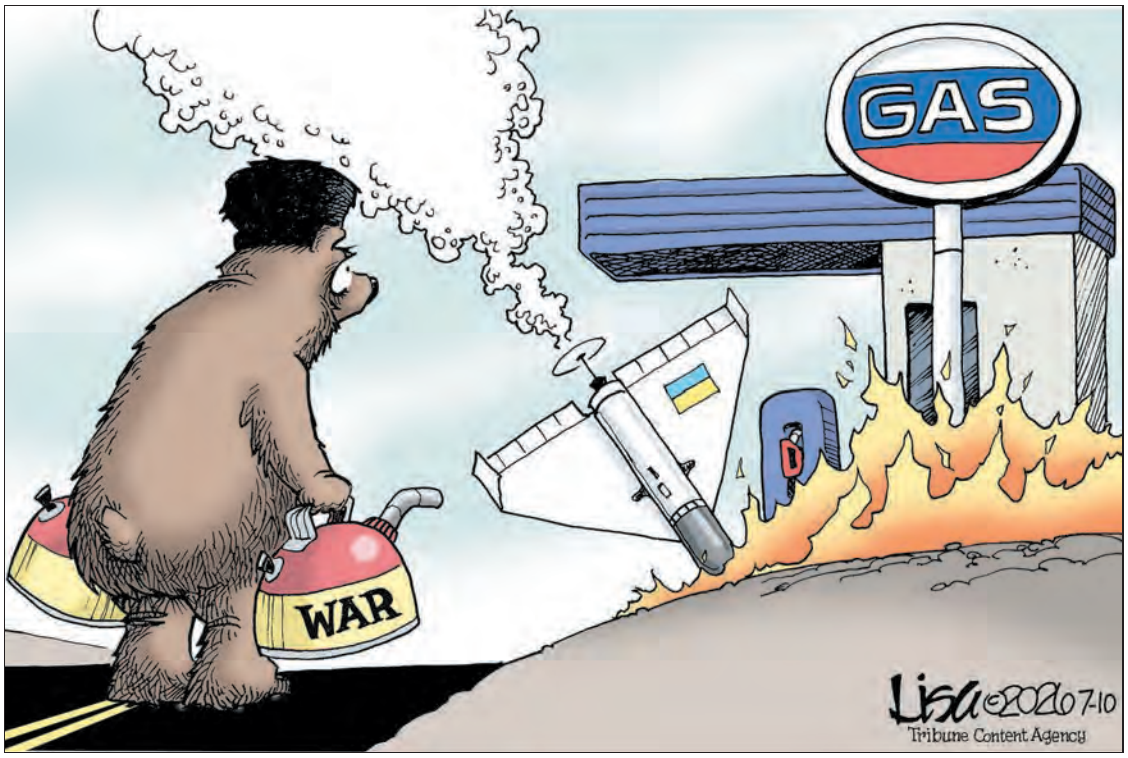

Tribune Content Agency

Iran’s Fake ‘Peace’ Ploy

RICH LOWRY

AN early period of World War II was known as “the phony war.” What we may be witnessing now in the US-Iran war is the end of a “phony peace.”

The nearly five-month-long conflict has featured a couple of sham ceasefires, each marked by supposed Iranian pledges to re-open the Strait of Hormuz that came to nothing.

With the Iranians firing on shipping on the Strait again, President Trump has declared the so-called memorandum of understanding signed about a month ago a dead letter. After lifting sanctions on Iranian oil and ending the US blockade of Iranian ports, Trump has re-instituted both.

He maintains that the United States will control the Strait, and at some point charge a 20% fee on all shipping for our trouble (one assumes this idea, at variance with our contention that tolling the Strait is illegal, will be a non-starter).

It was clear a couple of days into the war that the Strait of Hormuz had become the key strategic variable, and that Trump wouldn’t easily be able to walk away from the conflict without opening the Strait again. The MOU was an illusory means of achieving this goal via diplomacy.

The problem is that we thought — or wanted to believe — that the agreement said the Iranians would allow unobstructed passage again, while the Iranians thought — or wanted to believe — it said that they would control it.

That the MOU was subject to these starkly divergent understandings made it, in truth, a memorandum of obfuscation.

The Iranians, of course, aren’t operating in good faith — but it’s a point in their favor that the MOU didn’t simply say, “There shall be freedom of navigation in the Strait.” Instead, it talked of how the Iranians would “make arrangements” for ensuring “the safe passage of commercial vessels, with no charge for 60 days only.”

In other words, the Iranians had the whip hand in the Strait and could charge a fee for transit after a two-month interval. Furthermore, the MOU specified that Iran would conduct dialogue with Oman “to define the future administration and maritime services in the Strait of Hormuz.”

Amazingly enough, then, a war that had started with optimistic talk of toppling the Iranian regime was ending with an agreement allowing the Iranians to figure out how to run a waterway vital to the international economy that they *hadn’t* controlled at the outset of the conflict.

No choice: Trump is forced to ditch the MOU facade.

Is it any wonder that the Iranians, who must have been stunned at the success of their gambit in the Strait, have been pressing their luck? It must have emboldened them even more to hear Trump say that he was eager for the MOU because the economic costs of Iranian disruption of the Strait threatened to make him a new Herbert Hoover.

Effectively turning over the control of the Strait to the Iranians — coupled with the inconclusive US war against the Houthis to try to eliminate their threat to shipping in the Red Sea — would have been a black mark on Trump’s record regarding a long-standing tenet of American grand strategy.

Freedom of navigation has always been considered essential to US national security and a linchpin of global commerce.

Trump is right to want to take back the Strait. The question, though, is whether he will be willing to apply enough force, and have the staying power, to bring a battle for the Strait to a successful conclusion.

The domestic politics are difficult, given that the American public is not supportive of the war and has now been repeatedly told that it is about to end with a brilliant diplomatic deal.

And while we have an enormous firepower advantage, the Iranians have proven that they can disrupt the Strait with threats and a few projectiles.

They aren’t going to give up their strategic windfall easily, as two bogus, but highly touted, peace deals now demonstrate.

Dems’ Generous Gift To GOP’s Morale

JOE GRUTERS

THE Democratic Party is at war with itself — and in Maine, the fight has spilled into the open. Graham Platner, an alleged rapist with a Nazi tattoo on his chest, won the Democratic nomination for United States Senate last month, beating the candidate the party establishment had recruited by a commanding 53-point margin.

For months, Republicans and others had warned that Platner was unfit for the job. The Democrats did not care.

As soon as party leaders saw polling that suggested he could beat Republican Sen. Susan Collins in November they embraced him, hosting him in Washington, DC, and pledging as much campaign cash as he needed. His baggage didn’t matter. His poll numbers did.

Then the numbers turned, and Platner’s lead collapsed into a dead heat. That’s when fresh allegations of Platner’s monstrous behavior toward women appeared to confirm what Republicans had been saying for months — and within hours, the man Democrats had celebrated as their rising star became radioactive.

So the machine moved in for the kill — yanking endorsements, choking off the money, threatening to abandon the Maine Senate race entirely unless he got out. Within days, the nominee Maine Democrats had chosen was gone, run out of his own campaign by the very same people who had gladly leaped on his bandwagon before its wheels came off.

But erasing Platner was only half the job. Now comes the real pickle: deciding who replaces him. And the Democratic establishment has no intention of letting the voters anywhere near that choice.

> ‘This civil war is tearing the Democratic Party to shreds.’

Maine’s next Democratic nominee for US Senate will be picked in a backroom in just two weeks, crowned by a few hundred party insiders at a convention the public never voted for. The candidates fighting for the seat currently aren’t even required to debate each other.

Maine voters who poured their time, money and passion into this race will be handed a nominee and told to clap. If that sounds familiar, it should — this is the same party that in 2024 shoved President Joe Biden aside and planted Kamala Harris at the top of its ticket without a single vote being cast.

When the Democratic machine doesn’t like the result, the machine overrides it. That’s not a party of the people. And the progressives know it. They knocked the doors, they made the calls, and they won — fair and square. But their reward is watching Democratic leadership scheme to install someone more to the liking of the same insiders they just beat.

Both sides are growing increasingly furious, as establishment Democrats publicly slam Bernie Sanders’ clown car of unvetted, untested, severely character-flawed socialist candidates while progressives openly plot to take down the liberal elite.

This civil war is tearing the Democratic Party to shreds, and it doesn’t stop at Maine. In New York, a wave of Democratic Socialists swept three House primaries, wiping out establishment rivals and one longtime incumbent. In Colorado, 29-year-old socialist Melat Kiros dethroned Rep. Diana DeGette after nearly 30 years in office.

From coast to coast, the radical base is in open revolt — and a frightened establishment is doing whatever it takes to hold the line, even if that means silencing the very voters it claims to represent. The irony is that Democrats’ infighting only boosts Republicans’ chances of winning critical battleground races this year.

Even as their establishment is begging progressives to show up and vote in the fall, they’re putting their finger on the scale to remove a leftist darling. Meanwhile, progressives are nominating socialists and communists under the Democratic Party banner, forcing vulnerable incumbents in tough races to answer for their insane policies.

And I, as chairman of the Republican National Committee, could not be happier. Republicans know exactly who we are.

We trust our voters and let them decide our nominees: By our own rules, the RNC doesn’t get involved in primaries. We put up candidates who love this country instead of apologizing for it.

And while the Democrats spend the next four months clawing at one another in the dark, we’ll be out in the daylight — registering voters ahead of November’s midterm elections, getting them to the polls and making our case to the American people.

Let Democrats have their civil war. Republicans are fighting every day to win the midterms and defy history in November.

Joe Gruters is chairman of the Republican National Committee.

The Post Puzzle Page

SCRABBLE GRAMS

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A_1 E_1 O_1 U_1 R_1 G_2 C_3 RACK 1

E_1 I_1 L_1 T_1 K_5 S_1 L_1 Triple Word Score RACK 2

A_1 O_1 O_1 F_4 D_2 L_1 F_4 2nd Letter Double RACK 3

E_1 E_1 U_1 F_4 T_1 C_3 D_2 RACK 4

PAR SCORE 150-160
BEST SCORE 223

FOUR RACK TOTAL ____
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

TODAY'S ANSWER SCRABBLE GRAMS

C_3 O_1 U_1 R_1 A_1 G_2 E_1 RACK 1 = 60
S_1 K_5 I_1 L_1 L_1 E_1 T_1 RACK 2 = 83
O_1 F_4 F_4 L_1 O_1 A_1 D_2 RACK 3 = 68
D_2 E_1 F_4 E_1 C_3 T_1 RACK 4 = 12
PAR SCORE 150-160 TOTAL 223

SOLUTION

Directions: Make a 2 to 7 letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word using scoring directions at right. 7 Letter words get 50 point bonus. "Blank" used as any letter have no point value. All the words are in the Official SCRABBLE players Dictionary, 4th Edition.

Bridge

North dealer
Neither side vulnerable

NORTH
♠ K 5
♡ 6 5 2
◇ K Q 10 8
♣ A Q 6 3

WEST
♠ J 8 7 6 2
♡ Q J
◇ 7
♣ J 10 9 7 5

EAST
♠ 9 3
♡ K 9 8 7 4
◇ A J 9 4
♣ 8 2

SOUTH
♠ A Q 10 4
♡ A 10 3
◇ 6 5 3 2
♣ K 4

North	East	South	West
1◇	1♡	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	3 NT	All Pass

Opening lead – ♡ Q

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Bridge and other pastimes such as doing crossword puzzles are said to preserve mental acuity, but maybe not for everybody. A senior member of my club was lamenting a decline in his game.

"I wonder what the part of my brain that used to remember phone numbers is up to these days," he said.

My friend said he was having trouble counting the defenders' hands. At 3NT, he ducked West's Q-J of hearts. West shifted to the jack of clubs, and South took the king and led a diamond: seven, king, ace. (East should have ducked.) East led a third heart, and South's ace won; West threw a spade.

"I next led a second diamond," declarer said. "When West pitched a club, I took dummy's queen, cashed the A-Q of clubs and three high spades -- and lost the rest. My brain hit a bad sector."

South had a count. When East discards on the third high club, South knows West's shape was 5-2-1-5. So South can cash the king of spades and exit with dummy's last club. West must lead a spade from his jack to South's A-Q-10.

Word Force

WANDEROO

From the word or phrase above, form **AT LEAST 20** five-letter words, without using more than one form of the same word. For example, drink or drank (not both).

ANSWERS IN TOMORROW'S POST

Yesterday's word:

RINGBOLT

bigot
bingo
boing
bring
broil
glint
groin
ingot
intro
lingo
login
nitro
orbit
robin

Wonderword

How to play: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **Circle their letters only. Do not circle the word.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

TONER SURE IS EXPENSIVE **Solution: 5 letters**

E	B	P	A	P	E	R	E	T	U	P	M	O	C	Y
P	G	U	B	O	O	K	L	E	T	E	L	B	A	T
F	A	D	S	T	P	S	U	P	P	L	I	E	S	I
I	B	C	I	I	P	U	I	I	N	S	T	A	L	L
L	R	N	K	R	Ⓝ	C	R	E	G	D	U	M	S	A
A	O	Y	R	Ⓐ	T	E	R	C	E	S	I	R	E	U
M	C	R	Ⓒ	U	G	R	S	M	H	M	N	E	T	Q
E	H	Ⓢ	R	L	E	E	A	S	A	A	K	D	T	Y
N	U	E	A	F	F	N	I	C	N	N	S	E	I	P
T	R	S	I	L	D	L	H	T	X	E	T	E	N	O
B	E	L	Y	S	D	I	U	Q	I	L	E	F	G	C
R	L	E	T	H	N	A	L	E	T	T	E	R	S	L
A	R	E	C	E	P	T	I	O	N	I	S	T	C	A
N	L	E	V	E	L	E	C	T	R	O	N	I	C	S
D	E	R	O	T	S	D	R	A	F	T	R	A	Y	S

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Booklet, Brand, Brochure, Business, Cartridge, Class, Computer, Copy, Demand, Detail, Draft, Electronics, Feeder, Filament, Flyer, Inks, Install, Laser, Letter, Level, Liquid, Machine, Monitor, Package, Paper, Picture, Purchase, Quality, Receptionist, Refill, Scan, Screen, Secretary, Settings, Sheet, Smudge, Store, Supplies, Tablet, Text, Trays

Yesterday's Answer: Parties

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

POST SU DOKU

To solve a Su Doku, you must put a number from 1 to 9, in each empty box.

Each number must appear once in each horizontal row, as well as in each vertical column and in each of the 3-by-3 grids. Impossible? Not once you get the hang of it. Tips and in depth strategies at ***www.SudokuWiki.org***

PLAY MORE GAMES!
NYPOST.COM/GAMES

Solutions on Page 37

© Syndicated Puzzles

Very Easy #7,339

	9	1		5		4		
			9	2				
3				8		9		5
1		8			3			4
		4	2	6	5	3		
6			4			2		9
5		2		3				1
				7	6			
		9		4		5	6	

Difficult #7,129

	7	6		5		1	3	
				7				
			9			2	4	
5	1						2	
		8				3		
	3						9	4
	2	7			1			
				8				
	9	4		3		8	7	

Quick Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	■	6	7	8	9	■	■	10	11	12
13					■	14				■	15			
16					■	17				18				
19			■	20	21		■	22						■
■	■	23	24			■	25					■	■	■
26	27			■	28	29		■	30			31	32	33
34				■	35			■	36					
37			■	38				39			■	40		
41			42			■	43			■	44			
45						■	46			■	47			
■	■	■	48			49		■	50	51			■	■
■	52	53					■	54			■	55	56	57
58							59		■	60	61			
62				■	63				■	64				
65			■	■	66				■	67				

Across

1 Kit prepped by many soon-to-be parents
6 Hourglass filler
10 Cruise ship amenity
13 "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" spinoff
14 Arboretum growth
15 Massaman curry cuisine
16 Declare void
17 Not seasonal, as an indoor ski resort
19 Hither and __
20 Grampa Simpson
22 Hearty steaks
23 Petrol pump brand
25 Aromatic herb
26 Writer/actor Rogen
28 "Yo te __"
30 Sing with a trill
34 Texter's qualifier
35 Gratuity
36 Pants measurement
37 Alphabet ender
38 Pheasant family members with showy mates
40 Home screen icon
41 Pencil part
43 Writer Rand
44 Tech review site
45 Some van rentals
46 Caddie's stand
47 Like some skin
48 Stockpile
50 Intense anger
52 Pass on, as an unwanted present
54 Forensics letters
55 Quite popular
58 Idaho city named for a Shoshone chief
60 Fixed gaze
62 Make, as a salary
63 Sort of blue?
64 Part of a regular routine
65 "Minions: The Rise of __"
66 Class with asanas
67 Bottomless pit

Down

1 Word before scale or whale
2 "This is really bad!"
3 Omnivorous shark with a distinctive face
4 Soccer star Freddy who played for D.C. United
5 Fancy parties
6 Lid inflammation
7 "You __ My Sunshine"
8 Under, poetically
9 Horses awarded garlands of roses, perhaps
10 Elisabeth of "Cobra Kai"
11 Chef's vessels
12 Assistance
15 Products often applied before moisturizers
18 "Friends, ___, countrymen ... "
21 Course that may be taught by the Coast Guard
24 "The Chi" airer, briefly
25 Places where magicians' rabbits may hide, or what can be found in 3-, 9-, 21-, and 31-Down
26 Jeweler's gadget
27 Abrasive board
29 The Dolphins, on scoreboards
31 Collectible stuffed toy of the 1990s
32 Spot for a pin
33 Meaningless, as a promise
38 Student driver's document
39 Spud bud
42 One with a plant- and fish-based diet
44 Small part of a gear
49 First pope called "The Great"
51 Hinds of "9-1-1"
52 Rumble in the jungle
53 Linen shade
54 Soda choice
56 Purple spring flower
57 Is hip to
58 Cribbage piece
59 Streaming hitch
61 Bar bill

A	P	A	R	T	■	A	S	P	■	A	D	A	P	T
T	O	N	E	R	■	M	E	L	■	N	O	T	R	E
T	A	N	S	Y	■	P	R	A	T	T	L	E	O	N
I	C	I	E	S	T	■	I	N	A	S	L	U	M	P
C	H	E	W	T	H	E	F	A	T	■	■	P	O	M
■	■	■	■	S	U	N	■	■	E	V	A	■	■	■
A	L	A	S	■	M	O	C	K	■	E	I	G	H	T
T	A	L	K	A	B	L	U	E	S	T	R	E	A	K
M	O	P	E	D	■	A	B	B	E	■	Y	O	L	O
■	■	■	W	O	O	■	■	A	L	L	■	■	■	■
A	M	C	■	■	B	A	B	B	L	E	A	W	A	Y
S	A	R	A	T	O	G	A	■	S	A	L	I	N	E
S	P	E	A	K	E	A	S	Y	■	P	A	N	G	S
A	L	E	R	T	■	S	I	R	■	E	M	C	E	E
Y	E	L	P	S	■	P	L	S	■	D	O	E	R	S

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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Dow Jones Indust. Avg. Down 138.37 52,498.64

Business

Nasdaq Comp. Down 408.43 25,873.18

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Hike on table

Federal Reserve Gov. Christopher Waller warned the central bank may be forced to hike interest rates if new inflation data this week comes in hotter than expected. He said he was "determined to avoid repeating" the Fed's 2021 mistake of responding too late to rising prices.

Gold sliding

Gold tumbled nearly 3%, sending prices to just under $4,000 a troy ounce on renewed fears of higher interest rates. Gold is down about $330, or 7.6%, year-to-date.

AI call to arms

Hundreds of economists say in an open letter that institutions "must act now" to address how artificial intelligence could transform the economy and lead to big job losses. It was organized by Stanford University's digital economy lab.

Shein HK IPO

Fast-fashion retailer Shein is seeking to raise about $2 billion to $3 billion in a Hong Kong initial public offering, potentially as early as August, Bloomberg reported.

Rx greenlight

The Food and Drug Administration approved an at-home starting dose of Eisai's and Biogen's Alzheimer's drug.

Sources: Reuters, Dow Jones, AP

'MOUNTING DEFENSE

Skydance to fight states' suit vs. WBD merger

By ZAIN KHAN

Paramount vowed to fight a lawsuit from a dozen state attorneys general seeking to block its proposed $110 billion merger with Warner Bros. Discovery, arguing the deal would boost competition instead of undermining it.

A coalition of 12 Democratic attorneys general led by California filed a lawsuit Monday seeking to block the merger between Warner Bros. Discovery and Paramount Skydance, despite the deal having been approved by the Trump administration.

Paramount maintained the combined company would be better equipped to compete against dominant streaming platforms such as Netflix by investing more heavily in premium programming, theatrical releases and creative talent. (Netflix was initially gunning to acquire WBD.)

Disruption to workers

The company likewise argued delaying the merger would hurt entertainment workers who have already endured years of disruption as streaming and technology companies have reshaped the industry, costing California thousands of jobs.

"The lawsuit filed by the state attorneys general, in the most generous light, reflects a fundamentally flawed application of the antitrust laws and is wrong on both the facts and the law."

The David Ellison-headed conglomerate accused the attorneys general of protecting the industry's largest streaming rivals rather than consumers, saying the lawsuit would ultimately benefit major technology companies while preventing a stronger competitor from emerging.

"We will vigorously defend the transaction and demonstrate that this challenge is inconsistent with sound competition policy and the competitive realities of the media marketplace," a spokesman said.

Regulators in 24 jurisdictions have already cleared or allowed the transaction to proceed after reviewing its competitive impacts, according to Paramount.

The media and entertainment juggernaut is reportedly considering moving its headquarters out of California, with advisers to CEO Ellison urging him to relocate the company, a move that could shift billions of dollars in planned investment and production spending out of the Golden State.

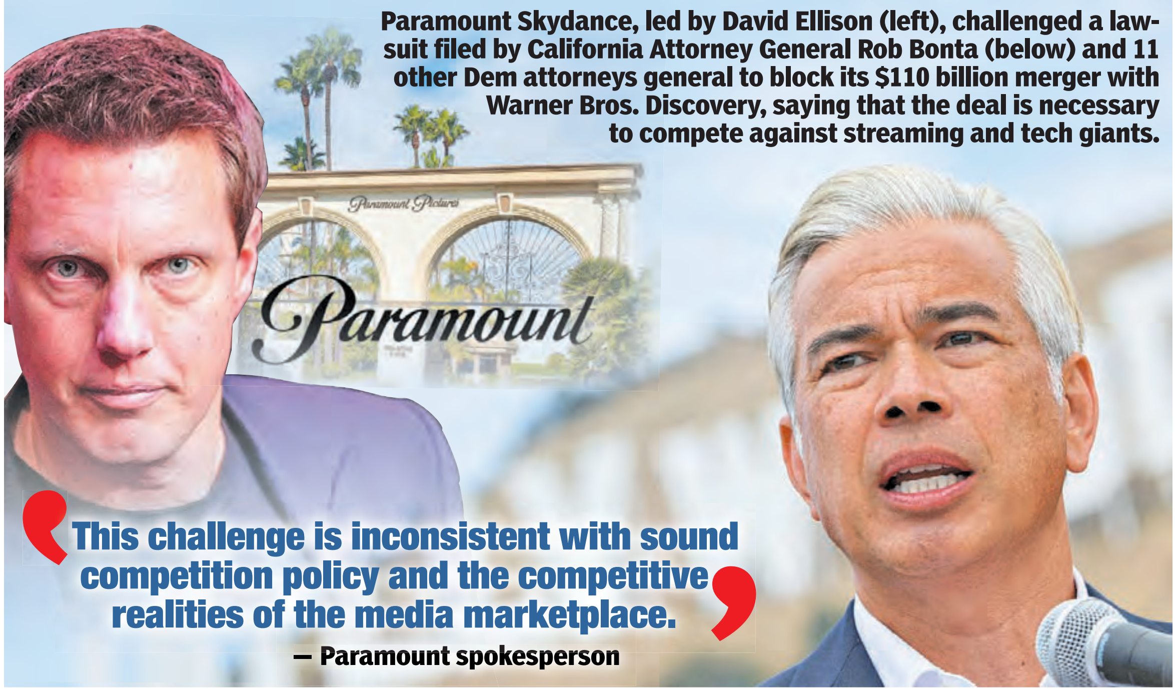
California Attorney General Rob Bonta brushed aside the reports during Monday's press conference, suggesting the timing was no coincidence.

"We heard that claim yesterday for the first time, and honestly, it seemed like a last-ditch effort to try to blackmail my office and the attorneys general into allowing an illegal deal, an illegal merger to go through," Bonta said.

Paramount, however, said the combined studio would be a stronger competitor to dominant streaming and technology companies that have transformed the industry, while boosting investment in movies, television and creative talent.

The media giant also argued that delaying or blocking the deal would only hurt Hollywood workers, saying the industry has already suffered through years of disruption that has cost California tens of thousands of entertainment jobs. It said the merger would create a "stronger, well-capitalized, creative-first media company" capable of investing more aggressively in premium content and theatrical releases.

Ready for action



Paramount Skydance, led by David Ellison (left), challenged a lawsuit filed by California Attorney General Rob Bonta (below) and 11 other Dem attorneys general to block its $110 billion merger with Warner Bros. Discovery, saying that the deal is necessary to compete against streaming and tech giants.

> **This challenge is inconsistent with sound competition policy and the competitive realities of the media marketplace.**
>
> **— Paramount spokesperson**

Reuters, Getty Images

Meta kills AI Muse over 'privacy' row

Meta yanked its new Instagram AI image feature — which automatically opted in photos from all public accounts — just a few days after launch following heated backlash over privacy concerns.

"Our intent was to provide a useful creative tool and to give people control over whether their public content could be referenced in this way," Meta Platforms said in a statement. "We've heard the feedback that this feature missed the mark, so it's no longer available."

The Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp owner last Tuesday launched Muse Image, its first AI image generator, meant to compete with OpenAI's ChatGPT Images 2.0 and Google's Nano Banana 2.

Meta's Superintelligence Labs folded the new bot into Instagram and automatically enrolled all public accounts, meaning anyone on the internet could simply tag your username in an AI prompt and generate an image using your likeness.

Many blasted Meta for automatically enrolling public accounts. Emmy-winning actor and "Hacks" star Hannah Einbinder slammed the feature in a post on Instagram, as did SAG-AFTRA, the union representing Hollywood actors and workers.

Taylor Herzlich

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Robot roll in the hay-Wired

A top executive at an AI startup accused Wired of turning an exclusive on the company's humanoid robot into a story about "sexualizing robotics," saying he felt "pretty betrayed" by the magazine's coverage.

"I gave Wired the exclusive on our hands launch, and they wrote a really weird article about how we are sexualizing robotics," Dar Sleeper, vice president of product and design at 1X, wrote on X over the weekend.

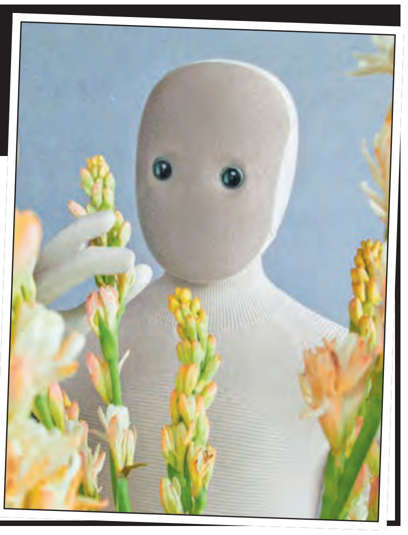
"I felt pretty betrayed because that's not what they told me they were writing about nor is that what I've ever been about . . . actually I stand for quite the opposite."

1X's Neo (right) is a $20,000 humanoid household robot — or $500 a month through a subscription plan — that the startup says can perform chores such as cleaning, fetching items and other household tasks using AI-powered robotic hands that use tendon-like cables to mimic the movement and dexterity of a human hand.

Story author Boone Ashworth argued that 1X's promotional videos of Neo "feel very sensual," describing scenes in which the robot's fingers "curl around a wine glass, turn off a light, unzip a jacket, and gently fondle some grapes."

Wired publisher Condé Nast didn't respond for comment.

Ariel Zilber



Chintzletown paper

LA Times 'stiffs contractors, vendors, star staff'

By ARIEL ZILBER

The Los Angeles Times repeatedly fell months behind on payments to contractors and vendors — even stiffing one of its own marquee hires — as billionaire owner Patrick Soon-Shiong pressed ahead with plans to take the 144-year-old newspaper public, according to a report.

Among those caught in the payment delays was investigative journalist Catherine Herridge, who struggled for months to collect money owed under her lucrative deal with the paper before finally getting paid after what sources described as a prolonged battle, the Status newsletter reported.

A spokesperson for the newspaper appeared to confirm at least some of the allegations, telling Status that the company is current on "the majority" of its payment obligations and that payments are "overwhelmingly being made in accordance with contractual terms for all active accounts."

"The assertions being made are not accurate," the newspaper's rep told Status.

The outlet didn't respond to a request from The Post.

The statement came after Status reported that the newspaper had repeatedly failed to pay contractors and vendors on time, with some waiting months to receive payment and only getting paid after escalating the matter to senior executives or threatening further action.

Herridge, the former CBS News and Fox News investigative reporter, joined the Times with considerable fanfare in November of last year after signing what Status described as a lucrative deal to host a weekly investigative series.

But the newsletter reported that the relationship quickly deteriorated behind the scenes as the newspaper fell months behind on payments owed to the veteran investigative reporter.

The Times ultimately caught up after what sources described to Status as a lengthy battle to collect the money.

Herridge didn't respond for comment.

The report also painted Soon-Shiong, the biotech billionaire who bought the Times in 2018, as intensely cost-conscious despite his vast fortune.

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'Tight'an owner blamed

Star investigative journalist Catherine Herridge (left) is among many who say they went unpaid for months by the Los Angeles Times' billionaire owner Patrick Soon-Shiong (right).

Adobe, Getty

Anti-Tylenol suits revived

A federal appeals court revived more than 500 lawsuits that allege Tylenol and generic acetaminophen can cause attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or autism if taken during pregnancy.

The 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan ruled that a trial judge had erred by excluding expert medical witnesses, offered by the plaintiffs, who were expected to testify that there was a link between Tylenol use during pregnancy and neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism and ADHD. The 3-0 decision sends the case back to the lower court for further proceedings.

The trial judge had previously ruled that reports by experts including Dr. Andrea Baccarelli, the dean of Harvard University's public health school, cherry-picked results and were unreliable.

Dow Jones

EU to curb kid social use

The European Union will move to limit young children's access to social media across the 27-member bloc, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Monday, in what would be the biggest such effort to date to guard against online dangers.

Von der Leyen presented a paper from two experts recommending a tiered approach, with children under 13 only allowed to use social media for limited periods under the supervision of parents, caregivers and teachers. The curbs would be lifted gradually as teenagers got older.

"It is clear we need age-appropriate restrictions to platforms," von der Leyen told reporters in Brussels.

"The question is no longer if children face risks online, but what can we do to give children a safer start online," she said.

Reuters

Stocks tumble, oil ri$es

Stocks fell and oil prices topped $80 a barrel Monday after President Trump announced a new blockade and tolls on the Strait of Hormuz while investors remained jittery about tech stocks — signaling more bouts of choppy trading could be in store.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 138 points, or 0.3%, while the S&P 500 and Nasdaq slid 0.8% and 1.6%, respectively — led by steep declines in chipmakers and AI-exposed stocks.

In a Truth Social post Monday morning, Trump said the strait is open — but announced, "We are reinstating the [sic] THE IRANIAN BLOCKADE, so named because it is only stopping Iran's ships or customers from entering or leaving."

Brent crude oil surged almost 10% to settle at $83.30 a barrel, while West Texas Intermediate jumped 9.4% to $78.14.

Meanwhile, chipmakers extended their losses — and SpaceX and SK Hynix saw declines after their record-breaking IPOs — as investors worry companies may be overspending on the new tech, creating an "AI bubble."

US-listed shares of SK Hynix tumbled 9% after soaring 13% on Friday in their Nasdaq debut. SpaceX slipped for a second trading day, falling 4.2% to $139.14.

Taylor Herzlich

No loans to migrants bid

The Trump administration is continuing its push to limit undocumented immigrants' access to the US banking system, urging banks to consider loans to them as potentially risky.

In new guidance, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and two other regulators said non-citizens working in the US illegally may have "less reliable" income or may be deported so they're a higher credit risk.

The guidance is nonbinding and doesn't impose new requirements on banks.

Wires

OLIVER BLUME
Can't guarantee the future.

VW eyes another 50K cut

Volkswagen said it might have to cut 50,000 more jobs in a renewed drive to bring costs in line with those of other big carmakers.

In an internal memo published Monday, Chief Executive Oliver Blume said the automaker was evaluating possible workforce adjustments across its various brands. Blume also said he couldn't guarantee the future of four German plants.

"Europe is under massive economic and geopolitical pressure. Germany, as an export nation, is particularly affected. And in the automotive industry, the challenges appear as if under a magnifying glass," Blume said in the memo, which was reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The latest cost-cutting measures come atop the 50,000 job cuts already negotiated with labor reps for its namesake brand and key subsidiaries including Audi and Porsche. *Dow Jones*

Last call for Jack's CEO

Brown-Forman CEO Lawson Whiting is planning to step down, as the Jack Daniel's maker seeks to move past a slowdown in alcohol sales and unfruitful deal talks.

Whiting, who has led the Louisville, Ky., company since 2019, plans to retire when a successor is appointed, the company said Monday. There is no set timeline.

The company last year announced a widespread restructuring, cutting 12% of its workforce. *Dow Jones*

THEY'RE AT IT AGAIN!

By TAYLOR HERZLICH

Tesla and SpaceX founder Elon Musk and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman reignited their nearly decade-long feud over the weekend.

In a Saturday post on X, Musk replied to another post announcing Friday that Apple was suing Altman's company for allegedly stealing trade secrets, invoking his longtime nickname for Altman: "Scam Altman strikes again . . ."

A few minutes later, Musk jabbed again, writing: "He takes scamming to a whole new level."

The world's richest man — according to Forbes and Bloomberg — continued his barrage of posts with an image of Altman that includes the words "I'm doing this because I love it," writing, "By 'this' he means scamming. He might literally love scamming more than any human alive!"

Fires back

The stream of posts apparently caught the attention of Altman, who quickly lashed out at Musk's own business ventures, including his debut of rocket-launch firm SpaceX on the Nasdaq last month, which was the largest-ever IPO. OpenAI has filed for its own IPO.

"[H]omeboy you're the one sellling [sic] public market investors on short-term space datacenters," Altman wrote in a Saturday post that has racked up nearly 15 million views.

Musk replied: "We start flying them next year. Maybe you can come see them if your parole officer approves. After stealing an open source AI charity, you then stole all of Apple's phone technology! Wow. What do you plan for an encore? That's tough to beat."

In its suit filed Friday, Apple alleged that "at every level . . . OpenAI has been stealing Apple's trade secrets." According to the complaint, one junior OpenAI employee improperly used an Apple employee's login credentials to access company servers.

Apple also alleges that OpenAI hardware chief Tang Tan — who spent 24 years at Apple, including as vice president of product design — solicited confidential information from Apple employees interviewing for jobs at OpenAI. Tan allegedly encouraged them to bring "actual parts" from Apple to "show and tell" sessions.

The lawsuit harks back to Apple's bruising legal war against Google's Android ecosystem more than a decade ago, during which Steve Jobs vowed to wage "thermonuclear war" against what he called a "stolen product."

Altman took Musk's mockery on Saturday as a chance to promote OpenAI's newest chatbot.

Last week, OpenAI released GPT-5.6 Sol while Musk launched its Grok 4.5.

"[T]here are a lot of benchmarks that suggest 5.6 sol is the best model in the world right now, but the most reliable way to tell is that elon is obsessed with me again," Altman taunted.

In 2018, Musk left OpenAI's board after donating tens of millions to the then-nonprofit. He later sued the company for transitioning into a for-profit public benefit corporation, alleging he was misled into believing it would stay a nonprofit.

A jury ruled in favor of Altman and OpenAI, but Musk has said he plans to appeal.

therzlich@nypost.com

Slings and arrows

In the wake of Apple's suit against OpenAI alleging Sam Altman's firm stole trade secrets by means including pumping Apple staffers for information during job interviews, Elon Musk (left) and Altman exchanged barbs over each other's business practices.

"He takes scamming to a whole new level."
— *Elon Musk*

"Elon is obsessed with me again."
— *Sam Altman*

Getty Images

Elon-Sam sniper war after Apple suit

Glass(house) ceiling's finally broken at 3 WTC

The World Trade Center hasn't seen so much positive news since before 9/11.

Ground was broken last week for the new Amex headquarters at 2 World Trade Center, which will complete the site's quartet of skyscrapers to replace the Twin Towers.

Now, ending a decade-long struggle to fill most of 3 World Trade Center's "podium" level, major event space Glasshouse struck a deal to launch its first downtown outpost in 66,436 square feet on three floors.

The lease is with Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield, which owns the WTC's retail space, and the Port Authority, which owns the land. Glasshouse partner Alex Holiday called the move a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to set up a flagship "at one of the most important destinations in the world."

Glasshouse already has three Manhattan venues, including 660 12th Ave. at West 48th Street, which several times has been the site of the Real Estate Board of New York's annual gala.

Most of the WTC Glasshouse space will be on the second and third floors.

Brazilian restaurant Fogo de Chao has 5,000 square feet on the ground floor, but the Glasshouse lease still leaves some retail space available on the ground floor.

The Glasshouse venue is expected to handle up to 2,000 attendees. The opening is at least 18 months away due to the need for design and construction.

Steve Cuozzo

EMPLOYMENT

TECH CAREERS

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Friday: Thursday 2:30PM
Saturday: Friday 2:30PM
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MILLER TIME?

Padres star closer flattered by rumored Yankees interest

CHASING HEAT: Padres closer Mason Miller said he views the rumors and reports of the Yankees' interest in trading for him as "a compliment." AP

ALL-STAR NOTES

By MARK SANCHEZ

PHILADELPHIA — The Yankees are frequently looking for relief help, always competitive and have the wherewithal to add at the very top of the market.

So Mason Miller has heard the rumors and reports — though more last year than this year, he said — that the Yankees would be interested in landing him in a blockbuster.

"The rumors are what they are," Miller said at Monday's All-Star media day at Citizens Bank Park. "The Yankees are a good team, and they're obviously a team that is going to add most years. I think it's just a compliment in a way that good teams are interested in good players."

There is every reason to believe that the Yankees are interested in Miller, though there is doubt whether he reaches the trade block (and if so, the price tag would be astronomical).

In an era of flamethrowers, Miller burns brightest with a fastball that has averaged 101.3 mph this season. That he throws his slider more often — a pitch that has yielded an .079 batting average — seems unfair. He would fit nicely in a shaky Yankees bullpen and push David Bednar to setup duties.

Miller has saved 25 games and pitched to a 0.91 ERA with 72 strikeouts in $39\frac{2}{3}$ innings for the Padres, who have been carried by the back of their bullpen but sit at 48-48 and $3\frac{1}{2}$ games back of the final NL wild card.

Trading the 27-year-old, who cannot be a free agent until after the 2029 season, would fetch an immense haul for the Padres, who know this well: In 2025, they sent a four-prospect package that was led by shortstop Leo De Vries (who at the time was the No. 3 prospect in the entire minor leagues) to the A's for the closer.

Would San Diego president of baseball operations A.J. Preller, among the most aggressive in the business, seek to replenish his prospect reserves and sell Miller if the team does not tick up?

"It's kind of fruitless to worry about something three weeks away, four weeks away, whatever it ends up being," Miller said. "Ultimately, it's out of your hands."

It is in the hands of the Padres, who started well but are 29-37 since May. They did enter the break having taken a series from the Blue Jays.

"We're going to have to wait until we come out of the break and see how those weeks go. See if that tells us anything," Miller said. "We could very well be in the same position as we are now. Then [buying or selling] might be a little more of a toss-up.

"I think optimistically looking ahead, we're excited we ended the first half on a winning series and look to carry that momentum forward."

➤ **Cam Schlittler** declined to pour fuel on the AL starting pitcher controversy.

The Yankees starter reiterated that he decided he was not going to pitch in Tuesday's All-Star Game before learning that Blue Jays manager **John Schneider** had decided to give the ball to his own pitcher, **Dylan Cease**, to start the game.

"There's no hard feelings," Schlittler told reporters. "That's not something I can control. I'm more worried about the second half, and Dylan deserves that."

In explaining his decision, Schneider cited Cease's "overall body of work this year" and his "body of work over the last three years" along with Cease leading the league in strikeouts. In most other categories, Schlittler holds the edge.

➤ An All-Star Game already missing **Aaron Judge** and **Shohei Ohtani** because of injury also will not include Schlittler (who said he wants to focus on getting ready for the second half), **Jacob Misiorowski** (fatigue), **Paul Skenes** (who pitched Sunday), **Chase Burns** (groin), **Max Meyer** (rest), **Ranger Suárez** (groin) and **Zack Wheeler** (who declined an invite after originally being snubbed), to name a few.

"The way the game is now, where there's rest, recovery, injuries, which are certainly validated, I still try to encourage players to participate because it is for the fans," NL and Dodgers manager **Dave Roberts** said. "To be able to showcase your talents in front of everyone, it's a special moment."

msanchez@nypost.com

Pettitte not a nepotism pick, Yankees claim

By COLLIN WARD

It's easy to claim nepotism when a team drafts the son of one of its franchise icons; just ask Bronny James.

In the case of the Yankees' eighth-round pick Luke Pettitte, though, Damon Oppenheimer promised it had nothing to do with his dad, five-time World Series winner Andy Pettitte.

In fact, the Yankees vice president and director of amateur scouting said the team didn't talk to Andy at all before the selection.

"I wanted this to be about Luke and his ability, and not about Andy," Oppenheimer said. "He's been great, but I thought that this was better off for Luke's career to take it and put it in his hands."

Oppenheimer said he thinks the Pettittes were actually surprised the Yankees took Luke, saying he was good enough to go anywhere.

They were, though, "ecstatic" that he ended up with the Yankees, now teamed up with his dad, still a special adviser to the team.

Oppenheimer said the Yankees were impressed by both Luke's pitching and hitting ability.

A two-way player for Dallas Baptist before undergoing Tommy John surgery last summer, Luke served solely as a DH this season. He hit 16 home runs in 42 games and was named first-team All-Conference USA and second-team All-Central Region for his efforts.

"We liked him as a pitcher; he got hurt. We followed him as a hitter, he's had power," Oppenheimer said. "The guy's got a good swing, so his name could have been [anything] and we were taking him based off the ability we saw here."

As for Luke's development plan, Oppenheimer said Luke will be allowed to hit and pitch in the low minors, with his performance deciding if he continues to do both as he moves up the ranks.

Luke, along with 20 other players, makes up a draft class the Yankees are excited about.

Their first-round choice, Hunter Dietz, already signed with the team, Oppenheimer said, and will begin his development in Tampa.

Despite taking Pettitte, Dietz and six other pitchers, Oppenheimer said they were not chasing the position, but rather the best players on the board.

He also said recent success stories, like Ben Rice and Cam Schlittler, make him eager to see what this class will do.

AL Standings

East	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Tampa Bay	56	38	.596	—	—	5-5	L-1	35-15	21-23
Yankees	54	42	.563	3	+6½	6-4	W-4	23-20	31-22
Boston	46	48	.489	10	½	9-1	W-9	17-27	29-21
Baltimore	46	51	.474	11½	2	7-3	W-4	28-25	18-26
Toronto	45	51	.469	12	2½	5-5	L-2	24-25	21-26

Central	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Cleveland	51	46	.526	—	+3	6-4	W-4	24-22	27-24
Chicago	50	45	.526	—	—	5-5	W-3	31-17	19-28
Minnesota	48	49	.495	3	—	7-3	W-2	26-25	22-24
Detroit	44	52	.458	6½	3½	7-3	L-2	27-23	17-29
Kansas City	38	59	.392	13	10	3-7	L-5	21-26	17-33

West	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Texas	49	47	.510	—	—	5-5	W-1	24-22	25-25
Seattle	48	49	.495	1½	—	4-6	W-1	27-20	21-29
Houston	47	51	.480	3	1½	4-6	L-1	23-24	24-27
Athletics	41	55	.427	8	6½	1-9	L-9	19-28	22-27
Los Angeles	38	59	.392	11½	10	2-8	L-2	21-25	17-34

***WGB:** Games behind third-place team in wild-card race

Monday

No games scheduled

Tuesday

MLB All-Star Game, 8pm

NL Standings

East	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Atlanta	55	40	.579	—	—	5-5	W-1	27-18	28-22
Philadelphia	54	43	.557	2	+2	5-5	W-2	25-21	29-22
Miami	52	45	.536	4	—	6-4	L-3	31-20	21-25
Washington	48	49	.495	8	4	4-6	L-3	20-31	28-18
Mets	40	57	.412	16	12	4-6	L-3	21-28	19-29

Central	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Milwaukee	59	37	.615	—	—	5-5	L-3	29-18	30-19
Chicago	54	42	.563	5	+2½	6-4	W-2	27-19	27-23
St. Louis	50	45	.526	8½	1	4-6	L-1	26-26	24-19
Pittsburgh	50	47	.515	9½	2	7-3	W-3	27-24	23-23
Cincinnati	43	52	.453	15½	8	4-6	L-2	22-28	21-24

West	W	L	Pct.	GB	*WGB	L10	Streak	Home	Away
Los Angeles	61	36	.629	—	—	5-5	L-3	31-19	30-17
Arizona	49	47	.510	11½	2½	6-4	W-4	27-20	22-27
San Diego	48	48	.500	12½	3½	5-5	W-2	27-24	21-24
San Francisco	41	55	.427	19½	10½	5-5	W-2	22-25	19-30
Colorado	39	59	.398	22½	13½	4-6	L-2	22-25	17-34

***WGB:** Games behind third-place team in wild-card race

Monday

No games scheduled

Tuesday

MLB All-Star Game, 8pm

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
San Diego	9	5	1	28	21	15
Washington	8	2	3	27	22	10
Portland	8	4	3	27	24	16
Gotham FC	**7**	**3**	**3**	**24**	**15**	**8**
Utah Royals FC	7	4	3	24	21	16
Kansas City	8	6	0	24	21	20
North Carolina	6	4	3	21	20	16
Orlando	6	6	2	20	21	19
Angel City	6	6	1	19	20	14
Seattle	5	6	2	17	13	16
Denver Summit FC	4	5	4	16	19	18
Houston	4	7	3	15	17	23
Bay FC	4	6	3	15	13	19
Boston Legacy FC	3	7	4	13	15	21
Chicago	4	10	0	12	8	28
Louisville	2	10	1	7	15	26

NOTE: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday

Boston Legacy FC at Orlando, 7pm
Washington at **Gotham FC**, 8pm

Friday

San Diego at Kansas City, 8pm

POST SU DOKU

Puzzles on Page 32

2	9	1	3	5	7	4	8	6
8	5	6	9	2	4	1	3	7
3	4	7	6	8	1	9	2	5
1	2	8	7	9	3	6	5	4
9	7	4	2	6	5	3	1	8
6	3	5	4	1	8	2	7	9
5	6	2	8	3	9	7	4	1
4	1	3	5	7	6	8	9	2
7	8	9	1	4	2	5	6	3

Solution to Very Easy #7,339

2	7	6	8	5	4	1	3	9
9	4	3	1	7	2	5	8	6
1	8	5	9	6	3	2	4	7
5	1	9	3	4	6	7	2	8
4	6	8	7	2	9	3	1	5
7	3	2	5	1	8	6	9	4
8	2	7	6	9	1	4	5	3
3	5	1	4	8	7	9	6	2
6	9	4	2	3	5	8	7	1

Solution to Difficult #7,129

WNBA

East	W	L	Pct.	GB
Indiana	14	9	.609	—
Atlanta	14	10	.583	½
Liberty	13	11	.542	1½
Washington	11	10	.524	2
Toronto	10	13	.435	4
Chicago	7	16	.304	7
Connecticut	5	18	.217	9

West	W	L	Pct.	GB
Minnesota	18	6	.750	—
Las Vegas	17	7	.708	1
Golden State	17	7	.708	1
Dallas	16	8	.667	2
Los Angeles	10	12	.455	7
Portland	10	13	.435	7½
Phoenix	8	17	.320	10½
Seattle	6	19	.240	12½

Monday

Atlanta 101, Los Angeles 92
Minnesota 104, Phoenix 100

Tuesday

Portland at Connecticut, 11 a.m.
Washington at Toronto, 7pm

Wednesday

Seattle at Chicago, 12pm
Los Angeles at Minnesota, 1pm
Golden State at Indiana, 8pm

Thursday

Liberty at Dallas, 9pm
Portland at Washington, 7pm

MLS

EAST	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	10	1	3	33	31	11
Inter Miami CF	9	2	4	31	39	28
Chicago	8	4	2	26	27	16
New England	8	5	1	25	22	18
Red Bulls	6	5	4	22	25	32
Charlotte FC	6	6	3	21	24	23
Cincinnati	5	5	5	20	36	37
NYCFC	5	6	4	19	25	21
D.C. United	4	5	6	18	21	25
Columbus	4	7	4	16	21	23
CF Montréal	4	8	2	14	22	31
Orlando City	4	9	2	14	23	44
Toronto FC	3	6	5	14	22	29
Atlanta	3	9	2	11	14	23
Philadelphia	1	10	4	7	18	30

WEST	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	10	2	2	32	34	12
San Jose	10	3	2	32	34	15
Real Salt Lake	8	4	2	26	26	19
FC Dallas	7	4	4	25	30	22
Los Angeles FC	7	5	3	24	24	17
Seattle FC	7	3	3	24	17	11
Houston	7	6	1	22	19	23
Minn. United	6	5	4	22	18	22
LA Galaxy	5	5	5	20	22	22
San Diego FC	4	6	5	17	30	27
Colorado	5	9	1	16	25	24
St Louis City	4	6	4	16	16	20
Portland	4	8	2	14	22	28
Austin FC	3	7	5	14	19	31
Sporting K.C.	3	9	2	11	14	36

Note: 3 pts. for win, 1 for tie

Thursday

Toronto FC at CF Montréal, 7:30pm
Vancouver at Chicago, 8:30pm
Sporting K.C. at St Louis City, 8:30pm
Portland at Seattle FC, 10:30pm

Friday

Atlanta at Nashville, 8:10pm
Los Angeles FC at LA Galaxy, 10:25pm

British Open Tee Times

First Round - Thursday
***Denotes amateur**

1:35 a.m. -- Matthew Baldwin, Thomas Detry, James Nicholas
1:46 a.m. -- Michael Kim, Daniel Hillier, Andy Sullivan
1:57 a.m. -- Ryan Fox, Andrew Novak, Matthew Jordan
2:08 a.m. -- Henrik Stenson, Max Homa, Joe Dean
2:19 a.m. -- Robert MacIntyre, Rickie Fowler, Alex Fitzpatrick
2:30 a.m. -- David Duval, Martin Couvra, Matthew Southgate
2:41 a.m. -- Sungjae Im, Daniel Brown, Fifa Laopakdee*
2:52 a.m. -- Gary Woodland, Jake Knapp, Jordan Smith
3:03 a.m. -- Francesco Molinari, Tom McKibbin, Lev Grinberg*
3:14 a.m. -- Hennie Du Plessis, Josele Ballester, Dan Bradbury
3:25 a.m. -- Angel Ayora, Victor Perez, Mateo Pulcini*
3:36 a.m. -- Stewart Cink, Scott Vincent, Joakim Lagergren
3:47 a.m. -- Michael Thorbjornsen, Kota Kaneko, Travis Smyth
4:03 a.m. -- Alex Smalley, Sam Stevens, Ryo Hisatsune
4:14 a.m. -- Akshay Bhatia, Harris English, Rasmus Højgaard
4:25 a.m. -- Ben Griffin, Hideki Matsuyama, Min Woo Lee
4:36 a.m. -- Russell Henley, Justin Rose, Viktor Hovland
4:47 a.m. -- Justin Thomas, Alex Noren, Jason Day
4:58 a.m. -- Scottie Scheffler, Tyrrell Hatton, Bryson DeChambeau
5:09 a.m. -- Jordan Spieth, Tommy Fleetwood, Jon Rahm
5:20 a.m. -- Brian Harman, Si Woo Kim, Nick Taylor
5:31 a.m. -- Ryan Gerard, Maverick McNealy, David Puig
5:42 a.m. -- Kazuma Kobori, Thomas Sloman, David Howard*
5:53 a.m. -- Antoine Rozner, Ren Yonezawa, Caleb Surratt
6:04 a.m. -- M.J. Daffue, Frederic LaCroix, Jack McDonald
6:15 a.m. -- Jeong-Woo Ham, Ryutaro Nagano, Alejandro de Castro Piera*
6:41 a.m. -- John Parry, Eric Cole, Tiger Christensen
6:52 a.m. -- Eugenio Chacarra, Matt Wallace, Max Greyserman
7:03 a.m. -- Michael Brennan, Sahith Theegala, Laurie Canter
7:14 a.m. -- Cameron Smith, Keith Mitchell, Stuart Grehan*
7:25 a.m. -- Sepp Straka, Joaquín Niemann, Kurt Kitayama
7:36 a.m. -- Sami Välimäki, Shaun Norris, Jackson Suber
7:47 a.m. -- Darren Clarke, Adrien Saddier, Bernd Wiesberger
7:58 a.m. -- Keegan Bradley, Corey Conners, Casey Jarvis
8:09 a.m. -- Matt McCarty, Harry Hall, Haotong Li
8:20 a.m. -- Padraig Harrington, Marco Penge, Michael Hollick
8:31 a.m. -- Tom Kim, Billy Horschel, Mason Howell*
8:42 a.m. -- Johnny Keefer, Pierceson Coody, Keita Nakajima
8:53 a.m. -- Aldrich Potgieter, Jesper Svensson, Jack Buchanan*
9:09 a.m. -- Bud Cauley, Jayden Schaper, Lucas Herbert
9:20 a.m. -- Kristoffer Reitan, Patrick Reed, J.T. Poston
9:31 a.m. -- Chris Gotterup, Sam Burns, Adam Scott
9:42 a.m. -- Collin Morikawa, J.J. Spaun, Nicolai Højgaard
9:53 a.m. -- Shane Lowry, Aaron Rai, Brooks Koepka
10:04 a.m. -- Cameron Young, Wyndham Clark, Ludvig Åberg
10:15 a.m. -- Rory McIlroy, Xander Schauffele, Matt Fitzpatrick
10:26 a.m. -- Jacob Bridgeman, Rasmus Neergaard-Petersen, Tim Wiedemeyer*
10:37 a.m. -- Patrick Cantlay, Daniel Berger, Nico Echavarria
10:48 a.m. -- Peter Uihlein, Alistair Docherty, Francesco Laporta
10:59 a.m. -- Cameron John, Austen Truslow, Sam Bairstow
11:10 a.m. -- Naoyuki Kataoka, Marcus Plunkett, Baard Skogen
11:21 a.m. -- Kazuki Higa, Jiho Yang, Nevill Ruiter*

Yonkers Entries

Post time: 6:45 p.m.

FIRST: 1 Mile $21,000 HGW2BN4PM; PACE

1	Art In Heaven	(CKelly)	2-1-4	5-1
2	Moonshiner N	(JBongiorno)	1-2-1	3-1
3	HurricneExpress	(ASegelmn)	6-4-6	20-1
4	Always Bet On Me	(TButer)	1-1-2	4-1
5	Ragnar Lothbrok N	(JBartlett)	2-1-2	5-2
6	Alabama Lucky	(BHolland)	3-5-1	6-1
7	Sweet Parlay	(TMerton)	6-3-4	20-1
8	All My Lovin	(JMarohn)	3-5-6	20-1

SECOND: 1 Mile $18,000 FM20000CLM; PACE

1	Yuengling	(BHolland)	2-6-2	2-1
2	Sheikh Yabooty N	(JMarohn)	7-5-4	20-1
3	Princess America	(RCushing)	6-1-8	20-1
4	Jive Dancing A	(CKelly)	5-6-6	4-1
5	Sunburnt	(JStratton)	4-3-5	20-1
6	Ideal Skies	(JBartlett)	3-2-2	3-1
7	Remi Lou A	(JBongiorno)	1-6-2	5-2
8	Miki The Clown	(MKakaley)	1-1-5	20-1

THIRD: 1 Mile $19,000 NW8041L5; PACE

1	SouthwindCelsius	(MKakley)	1-6-4	4-1
2	Missed The TruthA	(JBartlett)	7-3-7	9-2
3	Its A Me Mario	(LTritton)	3-6-7	7-5
4	Bell's David	(BHolland)	1-3-8	5-1
5	Points North	(JBongiorno)	6-1-4	20-1
6	Quote Me Not N	(CKelly)	8-4-6	20-1
7	SumomentsmwhereA	(TBter)	4-3-4	8-1
8	Just Enuff Stuff	(JStratton)	4-3-5	12-1

FOURTH: 1 Mile $19,000 CHGNW2PM; PACE

1	Tall Dark Shadow	(BHolland)	6-6-3	12-1
2	Killer Bee Deo	(JMarohn)	3-1-4	3-1
3	Darknstormy Deo	(MKakaley)	2-1-10	5-2
4	The Rascal N	(JBartlett)	8-1-4	7-5
5	FlyingMajorArtN	(ASiegelmn)	7-1-1	10-1
6	Ozzies CrazyTrain	(JStratton)	4-5-1	15-1
7	Captain Amore N	(TButer)	5-4-5	20-1

FIFTH: 1 Mile $21,000 NW11351L5; PACE

1	Dele Row A	(BHolland)	1-4-5	9-5
2	Courts On Fire	(TButer)	3-8-1	7-2
3	Kopi Luwak	(ASiegelman)	3-6-5	12-1
4	Printville	(JStratton)	8-7-2	20-1
5	Udderly SweetA	(JBongiorno)	6-4-1	6-1
6	HezaCharttopperA	(JBartlett)	5-7-5	3-1
7	None Bettor A	(JMarohn)	4-6-4	20-1
8	Fearful Intent	(CKelly)	6-1-2	20-1

SIXTH: 1 Mile $28,000 NW20000L5; PACE

1	Paris's Dragon	(TButer)	1-3-1	3-1
2	Hickfromfrenchlick	(BHollnd)	2-8-1	8-1
3	PanettoneHanover	(JBongrn)	2-6-6	7-2
4	Soho Dow Jones A	(JBartlett)	4-7-6	5-2
5	TheIdealDancerA	(PLachnce)	2-1-6	15-1
6	CollectiveWrksA	(ASegelmn)	3-4-3	20-1
7	Keayang Taco A	(JStratton)	1-1-2	6-1
8	Forward Flash	(JMarohn)	3-6-1	12-1

SEVENTH: 1 Mile $21,000 NW10000L5; PACE

1	Boston Bound	(BHolland)	7-6-5	2-1
2	WhatsStanleyGotA	(JStrattn)	1-5-6	7-2
3	Lyons Franky J	(JBartlett)	1-8-9	3-1
4	Captain Fear	(MKakaley)	6-6-3	20-1
5	Vanderbilt N	(RCushing)	1-3-4	7-2
6	Jett Star N	(JMarohn)	6-8-4	20-1
7	Spirit Of Stlouis N	(LTritton)	5-4-8	20-1
8	Hammering Hank	(CKelly)	7-2-6	20-1

EIGHTH: 1 Mile $23,000 NW15000L5; PACE

1	Mac's Marvel	(PLachance)	5-6-6	8-1
2	CoalfordTopguyGb	(JBartlett)	3-8-2	2-1
3	Zebs Krafty	(ASiegelman)	3-3-2	6-1
4	Better B Bold	(MKakaley)	8-2-4	7-2
5	Taste Of Honey	(JStratton)	5-2-1	15-1
6	Railroad Station	(TButer)	9-5-4	5-2
7	Jabbar	(BHolland)	7-2-4	15-1
8	Nandolo N	(LTritton)	7-2-7	20-1

NINTH: 1 Mile $28,000 NW20000L5; PACE

1	Churchviewfrnkllr	(PLchnce)	6-5-3	8-1
2	Mysweetboymax	(CKelly)	7-2-2	20-1
3	Aroda N	(LTritton)	4-1-2	2-1
4	Laser Speed	(BHolland)	6-5-1	9-2
5	Resilient N	(JBongiorno)	4-2-X	5-2
6	BrutallyhandsomeA	(JStrttn)	7-4-5	20-1
7	Matai Phil N	(TButer)	3-3-2	5-1
8	OddsOnCapitalism	(JMarohn)	5-8-2	20-1

TENTH: 1 Mile $15,000 NW5000L5; PACE

1	Rusty Beach	(TMerton)	6-2-6	3-1
2	Pyro	(BHolland)	5-7-4	5-2
3	Kimble A	(JMarohn)	8-5-6	10-1
4	DntbthermenneN	(ASegelmn)	5-6-5	5-1
5	Casino Action N	(VGinsburg)	7-5-5	12-1
6	All Alone	(MKakaley)	5-7-6	15-1
7	Pine Bush Italiano	(TButer)	2-9-6	15-1
8	Six Degrees	(CKelly)	6-4-7	8-1

Yonkers Results

FIRST: mile pace; 3-6yo30clm; purse $20,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 6:53 TIME-27.3; 56.4; 1:25.2; 1:53.3

2	Ever M (J Bongiorno)	4.94	2.30	2.40
3	Overthinking (J Bartlett)		2.10	2.10
5	Rayray (J Marohn)			8.74

• Exacta (2/3) $4.90 • Triple (2/3/5) $46.52 • $.10 Superfecta (2/3/5/6) $16.36

SECOND: mile pace; nw7500l5; purse $19,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 7:16 TIME-27.3; 56.0; 1:24.1; 1:52.4

3	RoyalDesre(PLchnce)	10.92	4.22	3.10
5	Jon I Love Dat (J Stratton)		3.24	2.74
6	Optical Illusion N (B Holland)			4.66

• Exacta (3/5) $19.17 • Triple (3/5/6) $109.28 • $.10 Superfecta (3/5/6/2) $34.46 • Daily double (2/3) $16.66

THIRD: mile pace; 30000clm; purse $20,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 7:41 TIME-27.4; 56.2; 1:24.2; 1:52.2

2	EverHopngA(JBrtlett)	4.30	3.24	2.38
3	HevenOnHghN(ASegelmn)		11.64	4.52
4	Peace Out Posse (J Stratton)			2.86

• Exacta (2/3) $17.74 • Triple (2/3/4) $58.19 • $.10 Superfecta (2/3/4/5) $35.36

FOURTH: mile pace; nw30000l5; purse $33,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 8:04 TIME-27.1; 56.0; 1:23.4; 1:52.1

5	EvleyeFleegle(TButr)	10.16	4.24	3.22
3	Young Bluey A (C Kelly)		2.24	2.26
4	Bondi Lockdown A (A Siegelman)			3.92

• Exacta (5/3) $13.25 • Triple (5/3/4) $92.49 • $.10 Superfecta (5/3/4/2) $23.19 • $1 Pick 3 (3/2/5) $68.78 • $1 Pick 4 (2/3/2/5) $222.43

FIFTH: mile pace; 40000clm; purse $22,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 8:29 TIME-28.0; 56.3; 1:25.0; 1:52.3

1	BettorBySesde(TButr)	4.48	2.84	2.14
2	Bondi ShakeN(ASiegelman)		20.50	6.78
5	Lyrical Genius A (J Bartlett)			2.50

• Exacta (1/2) $37.54 • Triple (1/2/5) $121.51 • $.10 Superfecta (1/2/5/3) $26.03 • $1 Pick 3 (2/5/1) $45.06

SIXTH: mile pace; nw10000l5; purse $21,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 8:51 TIME-28.0; 56.4; 1:24.3; 1:53.2

5	SpekerOfPc(BHollnd)	8.08	4.18	2.80
3	Dunkin' (J Marohn)		4.92	3.28
2	The Greek Freak (M Kakaley)			2.62

• Exacta (5/3) $18.78 • Triple (5/3/2) $61.85 • $.10 Superfecta (5/3/2/7) $19.67 • $1 Pick 3 (5/1/5) $92.50

SEVENTH: mile pace; 3-6 yo opn; purse $43,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 9:11 TIME-28.0; 56.3; 1:24.0; 1:51.2

2	CptnMoorA(BHollnd)	7.42	3.68	2.74
4	Gorgeous Big Guy (T Buter)		5.06	3.10
3	Verdun (P Lachance)			2.50

• Exacta (2/4) $24.55 • Triple (2/4/3) $85.36 • $.10 Superfecta (2/4/3/1) $16.47

EIGHTH: mile pace; invitation; purse $43,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 9:32 TIME-27.0; 56.1; 1:24.1; 1:50.4

6	SweetBechLf(MKkly)	6.12	2.56	2.40
5	Mossdale Ben N (J Marohn)		2.12	2.10
1	Soho Firestone A (J Stratton)			3.06

• Exacta (6/5) $6.09 • Triple (6/5/1) $18.36 • $.10 Superfecta (6/5/1/2) $4.50 • $1 Pick 3 (5/2/6) $53.88

NINTH: mile pace; nw15000l5; purse $23,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 9:52 TIME-27.3; 55.3; 1:23.1; 1:51.0

2	ChsHHnovr(JBongrn)	2.78	2.24	2.10
5	ThenuCmeAlongA(JBrtlett)		3.94	3.14
3	Hemsworth N (A Siegelman)			2.28

• Exacta (2/5) $5.59 • Triple (2/5/3) $19.73 • $.10 Superfecta (2/5/3/8) $15.96 • $1 Pick 5 (1/5/2/6/2) $281.49

TENTH: mile pace; 15000clm; purse $15,000
TRACK: CONDITION-FT OFF: 10:13 TIME-28.0; 57.2; 1:25.4; 1:55.1

1	OzoneBluChp(JBrtlitt)	5.84	3.12	2.38
5	He's Special (J Stratton)		4.10	2.44
3	Rocket Freight (C Kelly)			3.70

• Exacta (1/5) $15.56 • Triple (1/5/3) $62.63 • $.10 Superfecta (1/5/3/7) $40.70 • Late double (2/1) $4.56 • $1 Pick 3 (6/2/1) $25.03 • $1 Pick 4 (2/6/2/1) $96.88

Total Handle-$430,375.

NBA Summer League Schedule

Monday

Knicks 86, Detroit 75
Toronto 94, Indiana 93
Atlanta 102, Boston 90
Dallas 96, Memphis 88
Cleveland 90, Miami 73
Utah 80, Chicago 63
Phoenix 95, Milwaukee 88
Portland 111, Minnesota 84

Tuesday

Nets vs. Sacramento, 6pm
Philadelphia vs. Houston, 4pm
Memphis vs. Golden State, 7pm
Washington vs. Chicago, 8pm
Denver vs. Oklahoma City, 9pm
L.A. Clippers vs. L.A. Lakers, 10pm

FIFA World Cup

SEMIFINAL

Tuesday

France vs. Spain, 3pm

Wednesday

England vs. Argentina, 3pm

The POST Line

WNBA
Tuesday

Favorite	PTS (O/U)	Underdog
SUN	1.5 (166.5)	Fire
Mystics	1.5 (170.5)	TEMPO

FIFA World Cup
Tuesday- Semifinals

Favorite	Money Line	Underdog
France	$125-155	Spain
game held in Arlington, Tx.		
	Wednesday	
England	$110-140	Argentina
game held in Atlanta		

NBA Summer League
Tuesday

Favorite	PTS (O/U)	Underdog
Kings	2.5 (179.5)	**Nets**
76ers	4.5 (180.5)	Rockets
Warriors	3.5 (186.5)	Grizzlies
Wizards	5.5 (185.5)	Bulls
Thunder	1.5 (178.5)	Nuggets
Clippers	2.5 (179.5)	Lakers
all games held in Las Vegas		

MLB All -Star Game
Tuesday

Favorite	Money Line	Underdog
*NL ALL-STARS	$110-135	AL All-Stars
*Philadelphia		

NFL
Wed. Sept. 9

Favorite	PTS (O/U)	Underdog
SEAHAWKS	3.5 (44.5)	Patriots
	Thur. Sept. 10	
RAMS	3 (48.5)	49ers
	Sun. Sept. 13	
Cowboys	2.5 (48.5)	**GIANTS**
TITANS	3 (39.5)	**Jets**
LIONS	7 (48.5)	Saints
JAGUARS	7.5 (40.5)	Browns
Bears	2.5 (44.5)	PANTHERS
Bills	1.5 (45.5)	TEXANS
Ravens	3.5 (49.5)	COLTS
BENGALS	3.5 (50.5)	Buccaneers
STEELERS	3 (42.5)	Falcons
CHARGERS	11.5 (45.5)	Cardinals
EAGLES	5.5 (46.5)	Commanders
RAIDERS	3 (41.5)	Dolphins
Packers	1.5 (44.5)	VIKINGS
	Monday	
CHIEFS	2.5 (42.5)	Broncos

Home Teams In CAPS

TOP PLAY

The Spain train won't get derailed by France

By MIKE TURAY

After starting with an expanded field of 48 teams, it is not surprising that the proverbial co-favorites, France and Spain, have reached the World Cup semifinals.

The only shame is that this is the game before the final, but nonetheless, the UEFA League powerhouses are well acquainted with one another.

On one side, we have Kylian Mbappé, who undoubtedly is in his prime and leading a French attack with revenge on its mind following a loss to Argentina in the Qatar 2022 final.

For La Roja, it's the story of the teenage sensation. Lamine Yamal, 19, already has put his name in the grand conversation due to his exceptional one-on-one ability in open space.

The stage is set for what should be an incredible matchup, as France enters as slight favorites at +130 on the moneyline, with odds of +210 for a draw and +225 for Spain to win within 90 minutes.

Didier Deschamps and France are tasked with solving a Spanish defense that has been the best in the tournament, having allowed only one goal in six matches.

Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé and Michael Olise form a formidable French attack that leads the tournament with 14.6 expected goals. Mbappé has been off the charts, scoring his eighth goal against Morocco, tying him with Lionel Messi in the Golden Boot race.

The French have the tools to break down Spain, but La Roja's ability to control possession will be vital. Yamal hasn't found the back of the net as often, but his motor and presence on the field have helped Spain maintain the highest average possession at 66 percent.

It's hard to bet against Mbappé, but unlike Morocco and Paraguay, Spain has position players who can make things uncomfortable and test France's back line.

France has looked unbeatable, but I expect Spain to keep tabs on the possession battle and for its strong defensive presence to carry over.

THE PLAY: Spain to advance (+120, BetMGM Sportsbook).

STITCHES

Starry, starry night for NL

Breaking: A security breach forced rapper Jay-Z and the Yankee Stadium crowd to wait four hours before his show started. Been there; done that. Christmas Eve 2015: I waited in a chaotic line for five hours for a "wrapper" to start my gifts.

National League? American League? Justice League? Starters Dylan Cease and Cristopher Sánchez will be gone faster than Conor McGregor in his last fight. Some 30 pitches later, we bet $50 on the NL prevailing.

+$

And thoughts, James Carville? "These people are so f--king stupid I don't know what to say about it!" President Trump: "They're crazy. Loco. Cuckoo."

While Carville was talking about his Democratic Party and Trump was talking about the Iranian leaders, they may as well have been discussing the Home Run Derby.

Sure, it's an exercise in silly ... and we are just as ridiculous for betting on it.

Our money was on Junior Caminero. Unlike McGregor, he made it to Round 2, but Jordan Walker won the Home Run Derby. Down -202 homersimpsons.

stitches@nypost.com

WORLD CUP

France vs. Spain
Tuesday in Dallas

3-WAY MONEYLINE*	ODDS
France	+135
Draw	+210
Spain	+210
TOTAL GOALS**	**ODDS**
Over 2.5	-110
Under 2.5	-110
ANYTIME GOAL**	**ODDS**
Kylian Mbappé	+110
Mikel Oyarzabal	+200
Lamine Yamal	+230
Ousmane Dembélé	+240
Michael Olise	+310

Reuters
Kylian Mbappé

England vs. Argentina
Wednesday in Atlanta

3-WAY MONEYLINE*	ODDS
England	+135
Draw	+210
Argentina	+210
TOTAL GOALS**	**ODDS**
Over 2.5	-110
Under 2.5	-110
ANYTIME GOAL**	**ODDS**
Harry Kane	+140
Lionel Messi	+145
Julián Alvarez	+240
Lautaro Martínez	+250
Jude Bellingham	+320

*90 minutes plus stoppage time
**including extra time

Pitching Form

MLB All-Star Game		(Game time)	2026 W-L	2026 ERA	*REC	'26 vs OPP W-L	'26 vs OPP ERA	CAREER vs OPP	LAST 3 STARTS W-L	LAST 3 STARTS IP	LAST 3 STARTS ERA
AL All-Stars	Cease (R)		6-4	2.56	11-6	–	–	–	2-1	19.2	1.83
NL All-Stars	Sánchez (L)	(8:08pm)	11-4	2.62	14-6	–	–	–	2-1	17.1	5.71

* **REC:** Won-lost record of pitcher's team in games he has started.

SPORTS SHORTS

NFL: Rams LT heads to diversion

Rams left tackle **Alaric Jackson**, who was arrested June 9 on suspicion of felony domestic violence, has the opportunity to avoid criminal charges.

Los Angeles City Attorney's Office spokesman **Ivor Pine** confirmed in a statement to The Associated Press on Monday that Jackson's case has been assigned for a pre-filing diversion available to eligible individuals. The City Attorney Hearing is an alternative to misdemeanor criminal prosecution.

Though charges will not be filed against Jackson at this time, the case remains open and can be reevaluated if there are more developments.

Jackson has been the Rams' starting left tackle for the past three seasons, starting 45 regular-season games and six playoff games.

NHL: Sabres ink Krebs, trade Kopff

The Sabres made a series of moves involving their forward corps Monday, signing **Peyton Krebs** to a four-year, $18 million contract and dealing **Tyler Kopff** to the Capitals for fellow prospect **Zac Funk**.

● The Sabres also announced the hiring of former Rangers president **John Davidson** as senior adviser.

NCAAW: Tweaks to tourney bracket

Beginning with next year's NCAA women's basketball tournament, the top 16 teams will be placed in the bracket in their true ranking regardless of conference affiliation.

In the past, the top four teams in a conference would be placed in different regions to protect them from playing each other until the Final Four.

Now if that happened going forward, the teams would remain where their seeds should have them.

ETC: McGregor braces for surgery

Conor McGregor outlined a plan for surgery, rehabilitation and another fight following his knee injury in his shortened UFC 329 fight with **Max Holloway**.

"Surgery. Prehab. Return to martial arts practice. Go again. Final fight of the contract. Please God!" McGregor wrote on Instagram on Monday.

● In College Park, Ga., **Angel Reese** had 23 points and 13 rebounds for her WNBA-leading 16th double-double of the season, **Allisha Gray** added 20 points, and the Dream beat the Sparks 101-92.

● The struggling Athletics parted ways with pitching coach **Scott Emerson** on Monday

NEW YORK POST ACTION

Home Team Lineups

HOME AWAY

	TODAY July 14	WED July 15	THU July 16	FRI July 17	SAT July 18
	All-Star Game 8:00 Fox 880 AM	NO GAME	NO GAME	Dodgers 7:05 YES 660 AM 101.9 FM	Dodgers 8:08 Fox 660 AM 101.9 FM
	All-Star Game 8:00 Fox 880 AM	NO GAME	Philadelphia 7:10 ESPN 880 AM	NO GAME	Philadelphia 4:05 SNY 880 AM
	NO GAME	NO GAME	Dallas 9:00 Prime Video	NO GAME	Indiana 8:00 CBS

Wednesday, July 22		Wednesday, July 22		Wednesday	
	FIFA World Cup Break until July 22		FIFA World Cup Break until July 22		Washington Spirit 8:00 ESPN

Today's Sports on the Air

	MLB BASEBALL	
8 p.m.	2026 MLB All-Star Game: American League vs. National League	Fox, 880 AM
	MEN'S SOCCER: FIFA WORLD CUP	
3 p.m.	Semifinal: France vs. Spain	Fox
	NBA BASKETBALL: SUMMER LEAGUE	
4 p.m.	76ers vs. Rockets	Prime Video
6 p.m.	Kings vs. Nets	YES, Prime Video
7 p.m.	Grizzlies vs. Warriors	ESPN
8 p.m.	Wizards vs. Bulls	Prime Video
9 p.m.	Nuggets vs. Thunder	ESPN
10 p.m.	Clippers vs. Lakers	Prime Video
	SOFTBALL	
7 p.m.	Athletes Unlimited: Spark at Volts	ESPN2
	TENNIS	
6 a.m.	ATP Bastad: Early Rounds	Tennis
6 a.m.	ATP Gstaad: Early Rounds	Tennis
6 a.m.	ATP Umag: Early Rounds	Tennis
6 a.m.	WTA Athens: Early Rounds	Tennis
6 a.m.	WTA Iasi: Early Rounds	Tennis

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Getty Images

Marcus Freeman

College Football Playoff national champion

TEAM	ODDS	TEAM	ODDS
Ohio State	+550	Florida	50/1
Notre Dame	+650	Auburn	100/1
Texas	+800	Missouri	100/1
Oregon	+800	BYU	100/1
Georgia	+850	Washington	100/1
Indiana	+850	Penn State	100/1
Miami (Fla.)	12/1	South Carolina	100/1
LSU	20/1	Louisville	125/1
Texas A&M	20/1	SMU	125/1
Texas Tech	22/1	Iowa	150/1
Ole Miss	22/1	Clemson	175/1
Oklahoma	22/1	Utah	175/1
Alabama	22/1	Vanderbilt	300/1
USC	35/1	Pittsburgh	300/1
Michigan	40/1	TCU	300/1
Tennessee	50/1	Houston	350/1

ODDS & ENDS

MLB
All-Star Game
Tuesday, Philadelphia

RUNLINE	ODDS
American League +1.5	-176
National League -1.5	+146
TOTAL RUNS	**ODDS**
Over 7.5	-118
Under 7.5	-104
FIRST FIVE INNINGS	**ODDS**
American League	+165
Tie	+375
National League	+104
FIRST INNING 0.5 RUNS	**ODDS**
Over	+118
Under	-148
AMERICAN LEAGUE TOTAL RUNS	**ODDS**
Over 3.5	-108
Under 3.5	-118
NATIONAL LEAGUE TOTAL RUNS	**ODDS**
Over 3.5	-148
Under 3.5	+116
TO HIT A HOME RUN	**ODDS**
Kyle Schwarber (Phillies)	+370
Yordan Alvarez (Astros)	+500
Junior Caminero (Rays)	+520
Juan Soto (Mets)	+540
CJ Abrams (Nationals)	+630
Ben Rice (Yankees)	+800
Max Muncy (Dodgers)	+800
Shea Langeliers (A's)	+800
Mike Trout (Angels)	+830
Freddie Freeman (Dodgers)	+830
Drake Baldwin (Braves)	+870
Brandon Marsh (Phillies)	+870
Bobby Witt Jr. (Royals)	+900
Riley Greene (Tigers)	10/1
Andy Pages (Dodgers)	10/1
Cody Bellinger (Yankees)	+1060
Ozzie Albies (Braves)	11/1
Ernie Clement (Blue Jays)	15/1
TO RECORD 2+ RBIs	**ODDS**
CJ Abrams (Nationals)	+490
Junior Caminero (Rays)	+500
Kyle Schwarber (Phillies)	+550
Max Muncy (Dodgers)	+600
Yordan Alvarez (Astros)	+600
Juan Soto (Mets)	+650
Shea Langeliers (A's)	+650
Freddie Freeman (Dodgers)	+650
Bobby Witt Jr. (Royals)	+650
Brandon Marsh (Phillies)	+700
Ben Rice (Yankees)	+750
Cody Bellinger (Yankees)	+850
TO SCORE 2+ RUNS	**ODDS**
Kyle Schwarber (Phillies)	+440
Juan Soto (Mets)	+550
Mike Trout (Angels)	+650
Yordan Alvarez (Astros)	+700
Junior Caminero (Rays)	+850
Freddie Freeman (Dodgers)	10/1
Drake Baldwin (Braves)	10/1
CJ Abrams (Nationals)	10/1
Bobby Witt Jr. (Royals)	10/1

BET SMART

This double-'dog dare will pay big

By MICHAEL CALABRESE

Week 0 quickly approaches, which means it's time to grab favorable lines before sharps start hammering them. Two underdogs have caught my eye, and when you pair them together, you're looking at a payout of north of 6/1 to start your college football season off right.

Recommendation: NC State and Memphis to win (+628 at FanDuel)

Let's unpack the NC State-Virginia matchup. The Wahoos finished 11-3 last season, but I'm here to tell you they were a slightly above-average team masquerading as a CFP contender. They won three games in overtime and four games in total by six points or fewer. Of Virginia's 11 wins, four came against teams that finished 99th or lower in the final SP+ rankings, and another came over FCS William & Mary.

When they traveled to Raleigh to take on this same Wolfpack team, the Cavaliers squandered their red zone opportunities — two touchdowns in five trips — and fell 35-31. Now, they are faced with an offensive rebuild.

Virginia lost its starting quarterback, top two rushers, top three wide receivers, and its All-ACC first-team center. While everything clicked last season, Tony Elliott and his staff are counting on a lot of new pieces gelling in short order, and that starts with Beau Pribula at quarterback.

The dual threat is now with his third school in as many years. While he's a dynamic runner, he struggles to protect the football. Turnover margin was a big ingredient in Virginia's secret sauce last season, and I'm skeptical that Pribula can avoid turnover-worthy plays and sacks after what he put on tape last year at Mizzou (12 TWPs and 25 sacks in 10 games).

NC State returns a difference-maker at quarterback in junior CJ Bailey. The 6-foot-6 pocket passer finished 12th nationally in QBR (79.4) and orchestrated an upset of eighth-ranked Georgia Tech.

Dave Doeren, entering his 14th year at NC State, procured Bailey some new weapons when he plucked Jojo Trader and Victor Snow from the portal. Trader is a former blue chipper looking to break out, and Snow arrives as a proven commodity with 19 career touchdowns at Buffalo.

As for Doeren, he's owned the Cavaliers, sporting a perfect 4-0 mark straight up. I think he makes it five straight while exposing Virginia as nothing more than an ACC also-ran.

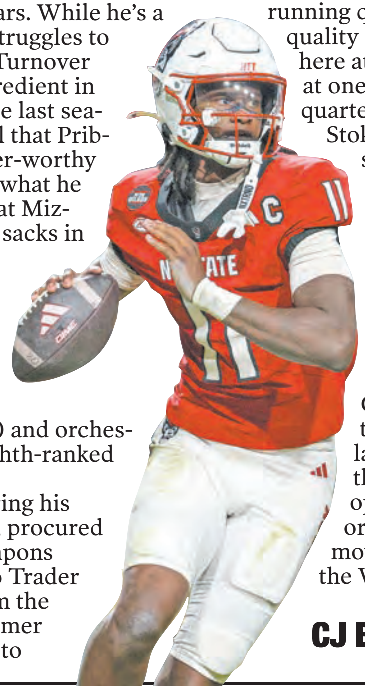
The second leg of this Week 0 parlay kicks off at 10 p.m. ET out in Las Vegas. UNLV, much like Virginia, is trying to validate a double-digit win season by hitting the ground running. But just like UVA, UNLV's QB1 replacement gives me pause.

Jackson Arnold was an abject failure at Auburn. He threw two touchdowns in SEC play while taking 23 sacks. That was also his problem at Oklahoma; he simply doesn't process fast enough to avoid sacks.

In this game, Arnold faces a Lance Guidry defense. In Guidry's last two stops as a defensive coordinator (Marshall and Miami, Fla.), his defenses' average national finish in sack rate was 17th. He finds ways to heat up opposing passers, and he has the best G6 transfer portal haul along the defensive line to make it happen. J'Mond Tapp (12 TFLs in '25) will likely introduce himself to Arnold before the end of the first drive.

Offensively, Kevin Decker is calling the shots. To put it lightly, he's an inspired hire by head coach Charles Huff. The former Old Dominion offensive coordinator turned the Monarchs into a terrifying rushing machine (seventh, 238 ypg). He did this by leaning on a running quarterback, and he has two quality options to choose from here at Memphis. Air Noland was at one time a top 10 high school quarterback recruit, and Marcus Stokes dominated the D-II scene last season. Stokes' 10 rushing touchdowns indicate that he may be the perfect fit in Decker's scheme.

UNLV's defense last year left a lot to be desired (SP+ 89th), and now it is facing a near rebuild (104th in returning production). Paul Guenther struggled to contain running quarterbacks last fall as UNLV's DC, and that won't change in this opener. Whether it's Noland or Stokes, Memphis will move the football and score the Week 0 upset.


Getty Images

CJ Bailey

STEW MUCH!

Breanna's big workload raises questions about Libs title hopes

LIBERTY BELL COW: Breanna Stewart has played heavy minutes for the short-handed Liberty, sparking concern about sustainability as New York navigates slow starts and a wave of roster injuries with the All-Star break approaching. Getty Images

By MADELINE KENNEY

MONTREAL — First-year Liberty coach Chris DeMarco was with the Warriors during their "Strength in Numbers" era.

But he's also seen Golden State, at times, rely too heavily on Stephen Curry to be the team's savior.

The Liberty are experiencing a similar dilemma.

Much had been made of the Liberty's depth heading into this season. General manager Jonathan Kolb built what appeared to be the most talented roster in the league.

But the Liberty are running a familiar script, with Breanna Stewart as the team's lead actress.

Too often, the star-studded Liberty exhibit an overreliance on one star — Stewart — to save them.

Thursday
LIBERTY AT WINGS
9 p.m.
Prime Video

New York asks the seasoned superstar to put on her seafoam cape and power the team to victory. She's their guiding light and Wonder Woman, but she alone can't salvage the Liberty's season and carry the team's hopes of contending for a title.

Stewart all but emptied the tank in Saturday's loss against the Minnesota Lynx, logging 37 minutes.

A day later, after crossing the northern border, the 31-year-old played a team-high 34 minutes.

DeMarco chased both wins as the Liberty rallied from double-digit deficits in the second half. Yet the results were the same, with the Liberty most recently losing 93-91 to the Toronto Tempo at Bell Centre as part of the WNBA's celebration of its first Canadian franchise.

New York dropped to 13-11 on the season and has lost seven of its past 10 games. The Liberty have three games before the All-Star break: at Dallas on Thursday, at Indiana on Saturday and at home against the Sky on July 22.

While Stewart is an All-Star for the eighth time, she should get some much-needed and deserved rest during the break.

But there's bubbling concern regarding the heavy workload Stewart has been carrying this season and whether it's sustainable in the long term.

Stewart has played in all but one of the Liberty's 24 games this season. The only game she took off was New York's June 25 loss in Seattle for scheduled rest.

Stewart, who's in her 10th season, ranks seventh in the league in total minutes with 758. She's averaging 33 minutes per game, her most since her MVP season in 2023.

Stewart's usage rate is 27.6 percent, tied with her 2017 season for the third-highest mark in her career. That's up 0.4 percent from last season.

This has been out of necessity.

Sabrina Ionescu missed the first chunk of the season because of injuries. She's been back for about a month but only recently reestablished herself and played a major role in both of the Liberty's recent rallies.

Satou Sabally has been in and out for various reasons and is currently in concussion protocol. Leonie Fiebich is now sidelined for the foreseeable future with foot soreness.

Their absences have put the burden on others, mainly Stewart, to steady the ship.

Stewart is still delivering big performances.

She overcame an uncharacteristic first half Sunday during which she went 2-for-11 from the field for four points. She finished with 22 points, going 6-for-10 shooting in the second half, and had some major defensive stops down the stretch.

She's sixth in the league in scoring (20.4 points per game), 11th in rebounding (8.4 per game) and sixth in total blocks (29).

But the Liberty's slow starts have forced the hypercompetitive Stewart to do more.

It's a long season that's more than halfway over. There's a FIBA World Cup break in September, though it's not much of a break since half of the Liberty's roster could participate in it.

Stewart is always going to be a major player in the team's success. But at what cost?

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Ejection overshadows Laney-Hamilton's promising effort

By MADELINE KENNEY

MONTREAL — A heated back-and-forth with Marina Mabrey, a thrown shoe and a subsequent first career ejection overshadowed what had been a relatively solid showing from Betnijah Laney-Hamilton.

Laney-Hamilton headed to the locker room with 1:48 left in the fourth quarter of Sunday's 93-91 loss to the Toronto Tempo after she accidentally hit Mabrey with a shoe.

Laney-Hamilton said she meant to throw Jonquel Jones' abandoned sneaker back at her teammate. She missed and the shoe flew into Mabrey, who was rightfully irked before realizing what happened.

Mabrey told reporters after the game she believed it wasn't intentional. Laney-Hamilton confirmed that was the case to The Post.

"I would never intentionally try to hit someone with a shoe, especially while they're not looking," Laney-Hamilton said. "Teammate was without a shoe, so I did my best to try and get it to her. Unfortunately, it did hit someone."

Laney-Hamilton knew spectators would try to connect the dots and make the incident a bigger deal than it was. Laney-Hamilton and Mabrey had been going at each other throughout the game as competitors do.

"I know just by the way that things were going throughout the game that it can look a certain way," Laney-Hamilton said. "But that's just not something that I would personally do ... especially in a moment like that where the game is on the line."

Laney-Hamilton was assessed a flagrant-1 foul late in the second quarter after her arm made contact with Mabrey's face while the two scrambled for a loose ball.

In the third quarter, Laney-Hamilton and Mabrey got into a skirmish resulting in both receiving technical fouls.

The shoe throw was Laney-Hamilton's second tech of the day, resulting in an automatic ejection.

Drama aside, it was one of Laney-Hamilton's better showings at the office.

With Pauline Astier in foul trouble and Leonie Fiebich and Satou Sabally not with the team because of injuries, Laney-Hamilton helped provide a boost off the bench.

Laney-Hamilton believes her six-point, three-rebound outing is something she can build on.

"It definitely felt good to just kind of find some type of rhythm," she said. "The game is a game of rhythm and so I think just hopefully I'm able to continue to build on that and everything."

Laney-Hamilton's difficult season has been well documented. Her role has fluctuated after returning from a yearlong knee surgery recovery. She's on a one-year deal and could be a trade candidate with the Aug. 2 deadline approaching.

Laney-Hamilton, though, is doing her best to stay levelheaded.

"Just going into it with the mindset of just staying ready," she said. "Obviously, it's been really tough. Everything's been kind of uncertain and just ups and downs, but I just really been trying to focus on staying ready for the moment and just going out there."

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Rangers re-sign Schneider

By ANDREW CRANE

Braden Schneider and the Rangers avoided arbitration Monday, with the sides agreeing to one-year deal worth $5.5 million, according to The Post's Mollie Walker.

Schneider, who was the Blueshirts' first-round pick in 2020 and who has been involved in trade rumors dating to last season, became a restricted free agent — after receiving the qualifying offer — when his two-year, $4.4 million deal expired and was set for an arbitration hearing July 29, according to multiple reports. He'll be a restricted free agent next summer, too.

BRADEN SCHNEIDER

This whole process didn't lead to any long-term clarity between Schneider, who collected two goals and 18 points while skating in all 82 games last year, and the Blueshirts. The rumors won't fade, especially if he's on the roster at the start of the season and the Rangers struggle again ahead of the trade deadline. But, to this point, it also hasn't led to a new team, either — and the defenseman, who has skated in at least 80 games since the 2022-23 season while encountering growing pains and struggles along the way, said at the end of last season that he'd love to remain with the Rangers.

"We think Braden is a really good young talented defenseman," president and general manager Chris Drury told reporters July 2. "We drafted him, developed him, we like the skill set and what he does for us. I know he, along with us, are just trying to do everything we can to be better and help him be better, but he's an exciting player and a terrific all-around, high-character person in our organization."

They also overhauled their blue line once July 1 arrived, with right-handed defenseman Sean Durzi part of the return package in the Vincent Trocheck-Mammoth trade and Marcus Pettersson — able to fill the second pairing on the left side behind Vladislav Gavrikov — joining the Blueshirts' top four after getting acquired from Vancouver in exchange for a top 10 protected first-round pick in 2030. Will Borgen was also traded to the Bruins in exchange for a pair of draft picks.

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Fit for Queens

Gotham FC set for record crowd at Citi Field showcase

STEPPING TO THE PLATE: Esther González and Gotham FC are poised to make history Wednesday when they take the field against the Spirit in front of a crowd of more than 40,000 at Citi Field (inset), which often hosts NYCFC games. Imagn Images; Jason Szenes

By JONATHAN LEHMAN

The biggest home game in Gotham FC history began as a projected road date.

Sports Illustrated Stadium, the NWSL champions' typical home stadium in Harrison, N.J., is booked for men's World Cup festivities through Sunday's final at neighboring MetLife Stadium.

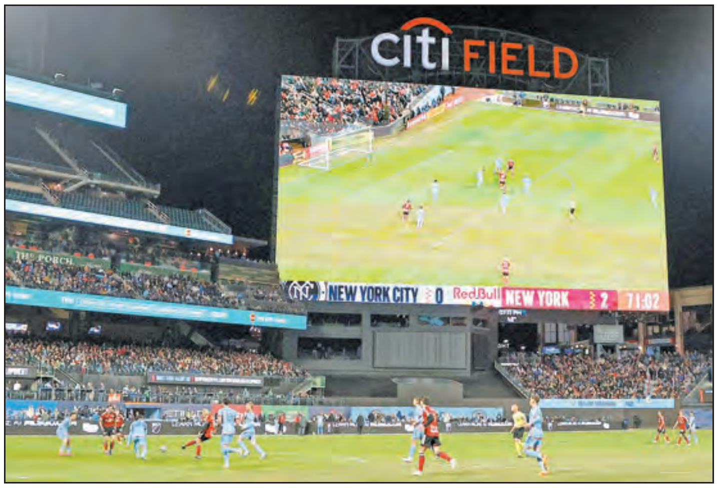
It's a landmark week in American soccer history — for soccer in the New York area, specifically — and the default assumption was the region's premier women's team would have to spend it on the road. Then, the counterattack.

Wednesday
SPIRIT AT GOTHAM
at Citi Field
8 p.m.
ESPN

"We kind of sat around and said ... we have to be part of this," Gotham owner Carolyn Tisch Blodgett recalled. "We have to lean into this moment. When soccer is leading the cultural conversation, we want to be a part of it."

It was from those initial internal conversations last year that The Queens Classic was born.

On Wednesday night, Gotham will host a match at Citi Field, the first-ever regular-season NWSL match in New York City.



With more than 40,000 tickets sold as of Monday, they are set to shatter the franchise's single-game attendance record (15,569 in the 2024 playoffs) and the mark for the highest-attended women's sporting event in NYC (28,144 for Coco Gauff's U.S. Open women's singles final in 2023).

A sellout of the ballpark's capacity of roughly 42,000 is in range.

Gotham, building off the example of previous NWSL games in baseball stadiums in Chicago and San Francisco, quickly landed on Citi Field — which is across the road from the team's future home field at Etihad Park — as the ideal alternative venue.

"We sat down with them really early on and said we want to break the New York women's sports attendance record, and we need your help," Tisch Blodgett told The Post. "The entire Mets organization believed in this from day one, and worked really hard with us to make it happen."

Gotham worked across its departments to market The Queens Classic as a special event. Laura Petro, Gotham's VP of brand and fan experiences, ticked off paid media campaigns, social media outreach, working with influencers and a ticket deal partnership with the mayor among the levers they've pulled to garner a record-setting attendance.

"Having a really strong narrative ... I think that that has driven so much of this," Petro told The Post. "The messaging that is really resonating [is] around making history and being a part of something."

Petro said Gotham has sold tickets to "a lot of net-new buyers and first-time fans," which she attributed in part to the novelty and accessible location off the subway in Queens.

The match being Sam Kerr's likely debut and against Gotham's biggest rivals, the Washington Spirit, the team they beat in last year's final to avenge a heartbreaking semifinals loss from 2024, only adds to the hype. Expect a few Spirit fans in the crowd to make up the numbers.

Leading up to the 8 p.m. match is an afternoon-long "Footy Fest" hosted by USWNT alum Sam Mewis including a watch party for the England-Argentina semifinal, a live recording of the "Welcome to the Party" podcast with Julie Foudy and Abby Wambach and live DJ sets.

"Our team has done a tremendous job and spent months focused on creating this really special event," Tisch Blodgett said. "But at some point this will just be the standard that when Gotham comes to town, we sell out — and that's what we're striving for."

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Ewing couldn't pass up chance to coach again

By STEFAN BONDY

LAS VEGAS — Patrick Ewing had to leave to scratch his itch.

In an interview with The Post on Sunday, the Hall of Famer revealed he joined the Wizards as an assistant because of a golden opportunity to get back to coaching. It's a chance that wasn't available with the Knicks after Ewing spent two seasons as their basketball ambassador.

"I take my hat off to the Knicks. Both Leon [Rose] and World Wide Wes and Mr. [James] Dolan have done a great job in terms of what they've done in making all of us feel like we're all a part of everything that's going on," Ewing said. "But their [assistant] bench was already stacked. So I think they have some great guys there. I enjoyed being around them, learning from them, picking their brains. So there was not an opportunity there for me. And one was here."

Ewing, 63, was the head coach at his alma mater Georgetown for five seasons until 2023. Before that, he served as an assistant with the Wizards, Rockets, Magic and Bobcats.

Still, Ewing's NBA identity is built around New York as the franchise's all-time leading scorer, rebounder and shot blocker. He reunited with the Knicks in 2024 in the ambassador role and became a fixture at games and practices — including during their championship run — but desired another chance to pursue coaching.

A return to the Wizards felt right.

"I still have the coaching bug. It was a great run for us last year in New York, being able to win a championship, get to the Eastern Conference finals the year before. But this opportunity came up and I came on board," Ewing said. "I know [Wizards executive] John [Thompson III]. ... I know the D.C. area. I still live there. I was going back and forth from New York when I was with the Knicks. I thought it was a great fit here. Being able to work with the guys I'm working with and to continue my coaching tree."

PATRICK EWING

The Knicks, meanwhile, have a veteran and acclaimed coaching staff that includes Chris Jent, Rick Brunson, Darren Erman, Brendan O'Connor, Maurice Cheeks, Mark Bryant, Jordan Brink, Peter Patton and Kwadzo Ahelegbe, among others.

The Wizards revamped their staff this summer under head coach Brian Keefe, hiring Ewing and Steve Clifford while promoting Adam Caporn and Cody Toppert.

"That [coaching bug] hasn't left yet. I enjoy it," Ewing said. "I enjoy teaching. I enjoy trying to give back to a lot of these young kids."

To get back into coaching, Ewing is leaving the champs for the NBA's worst team last season. The Wizards, who went 17-65, have embarked on a long rebuild, but they appear ready to compete next season with Trae Young and Anthony Davis on the roster.

They also have top young prospects AJ Dybantsa, the No. 1 overall pick this year, and Alex Sarr, the No. 2 pick in 2024.

"We do have a lot of talent," Ewing said. "You can't predict the future. All you can do is just — you have the talent, now you got to work with the talent. We haven't started practicing yet — just with these [summer league players]. But I hope our future will be bright and be able to make some noise in the Eastern Conference."

Ewing certainly left the Knicks on a high note. His last game as basketball ambassador was Game 5 of the NBA Finals, when Jalen Brunson broke the franchise's 53-year title drought. It became the happy ending because coaching beckoned.

"All of that was great. Seeing Jalen doing his thing. Putting on his cape and carrying us on his back," Ewing said. "[Karl-Anthony Towns] doing the things that he was doing. Mikal Bridges. The whole entire team did what they needed to do to help us to get to this party."

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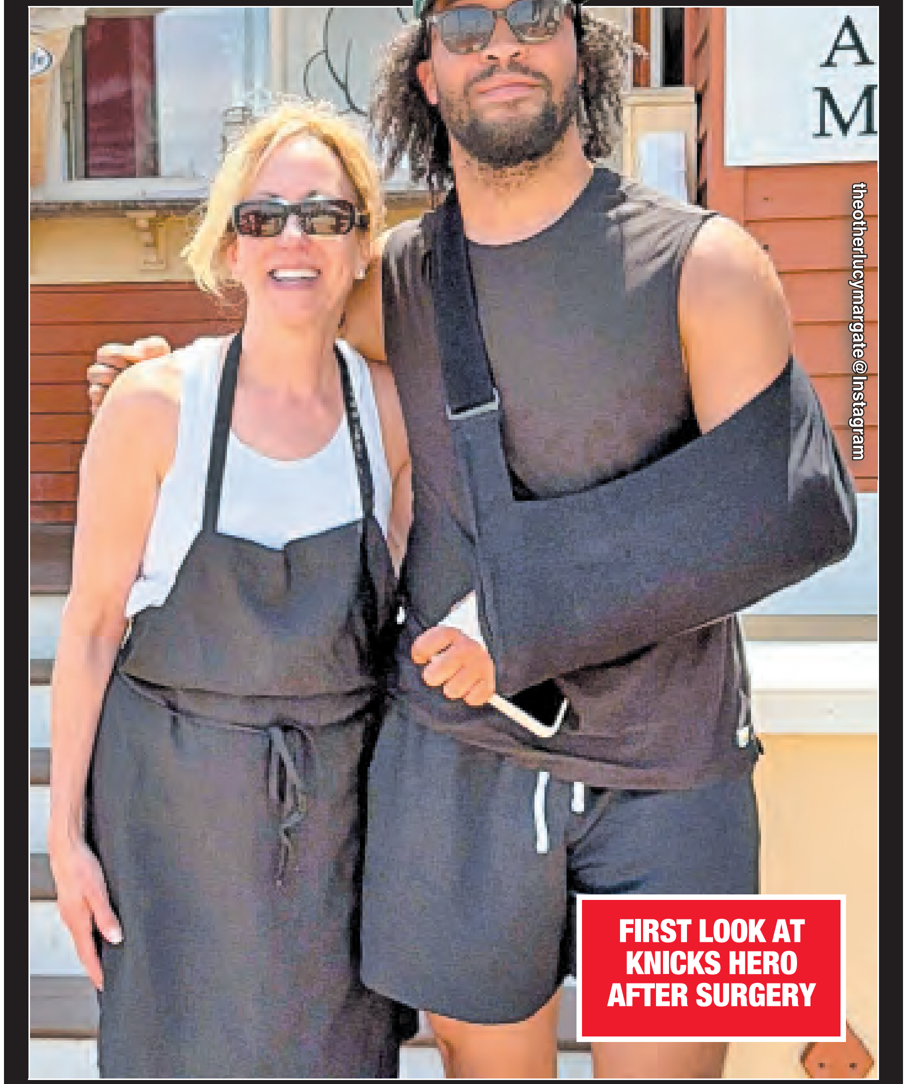
CAST IRON



theotherlucymargate@Instagram

FIRST LOOK AT KNICKS HERO AFTER SURGERY

Jalen Brunson was spotted Saturday for the first time since his left wrist surgery, photographed paying a visit to The Other Lucy Beach Grille in Margate, N.J. His left hand and wrist were wrapped and resting in a sling almost a month after winning NBA Finals MVP with the Knicks. He underwent surgery last Tuesday to repair a tendon issue in his left hand and wrist that he dealt with throughout the playoffs, all the way through the first Knicks championship since 1973. His recovery is estimated to be six to eight weeks, meaning he should be ready to go when the Knicks begin their title defense later this year.
— *Grace McCarron*

Jones pitched in to Finals win ... just not on the court

By STEFAN BONDY

LAS VEGAS — Dillon Jones logged zero minutes in the NBA Finals but made his contributions to the title as a pseudo-adviser to coach Mike Brown.

As a member of the 2025 championship Thunder, Jones offered experience in how to deal with the circumstances. Brown not only sought his young player's counsel, he implemented at least one suggestion by making the Knicks rewatch their Game 3 loss to the Spurs.

The Thunder did something similar for motivation a year prior when Jones was a reserve guard.

"With coach, honestly, it speaks a lot to just him more than me and whatever I had to say," Jones said Monday after he helped the summer league squad defeat the Pistons 86-75. "The fact that he would even approach me and have a conversation with me or even ask me to help in any way. ... I just think it speaks to him more than me — his humility to hear everybody out in the building. And I'm just glad I was able to help the team in any way."

KNICKS NOTES

Jones said the idea to rewatch Game 3 came up in "organic conversations" with Brown.

"Nothing specific. Just conversations me and coach had," Jones said. "And we were just talking about different things, and it came up in an organic conversation. It wasn't like I was just sitting home plotting on what to say or anything like that. ... These things — you try different things all the time. You never know what works and what doesn't. I'm glad I was able to help the team."

Jones is now fighting for a training camp invite.

➤ **Mohamed Diawara** (left ring finger injury) and **Pacôme Dadiet** (right foot soreness) both sat Monday, but the Knicks didn't miss them — riding rookie **Jack Kayil** to their first summer league win.

Kayil, a second-round pick who played last season in Germany, dropped a team-high 19 points with three steals in 29 minutes.

"Very talented kid. Super gifted," Jones said. "One thing I appreciate with him — obviously, he wasn't available early in summer league but when he came in the group, he knew what was going on, he understood what was going on. I think that speaks to his upbringing and coming up in Europe. Very talented kid. ... He's not going there trying to overshadow. ... He's got a bright future."

Kayil arrived late to summer league because of a contract dispute with his German club. He said he doesn't want to be stashed overseas this season.

Fixer-upper

2025 1st-rounder's shot in total disarray

By BRIAN LEWIS

LAS VEGAS — Drake Powell's shooting slump is part mental, part mechanical and entirely maddening.

It's always unwise to put too much stock in rookie summer league performances. But as a second-year pro, the defensive-minded Powell was expected to take a step forward offensively. Instead, the young Nets guard has sunk deeper into a funk.

Through his first four appearances — between the California Classic and now here — Powell is trying to keep the right headspace while he tinkers with his jumper. So far, the results have been dire.

"Some nights are obviously hard when I'm by myself in the hotel room," Powell said. "But just constant conversations with my circle, just continue to trust them. And then my coaches as well."

Powell will have to trust in the work because the results have been sorely lacking.

A first-round pick a year ago, Powell has mustered just 11 points total in four summer league tilts entering Tuesday's clash with the Kings. He has shot 1-for-28 overall and 0-for-14 — not a misprint — from behind the arc.

Even that "1," his only bucket of summer league, came July 6 vs. Golden State's Blue Team, essentially the Warriors B squad.

"I've been working a little bit — no, not a little bit but a lot — with my coaches on my shot. Obviously, they're not going in right now," Powell said. "I'm going to continue to put them up and just have full confidence that it's going to go in."

Powell said there are mechanical tweaks that he and the Nets coaches are making, but he declined to be specific on what they were.

Meanwhile, Nets summer league coach Dutch Gaitley told The Post that they're trying to simplify things for the struggling 20-year-old. They're also reiterating to him their faith in him.

"Just that we have full confidence in him taking the right shots. And I think Drake did take the right shots ... just the ball didn't go in," Gaitley said. "Defensively, he's been outstanding. He's done everything. It's not easy for a young player to struggle offensively and still give great effort defensively, and he's done that. I have full confidence the shot's going to drop. I want him to keep shooting.

"We need him to get out in transition a little more. Let's see if we can get some more offensive rebounds. All of us who played basketball, when the shot's not dropping, how can I just see one go in? ... We're trying to help him along, and he's doing a great job defensively. I have full confidence that the shot's going to drop."

Powell has been taking tough looks off the dribble, out of character for a player with a low usage rate. He said it wasn't a matter of being tasked with expanding his game but just a result of game flow.

Yes, Powell's defense has been stout and disruptive as usual. But he has to do enough on offense that the Nets can afford to keep him on the floor.

"I definitely want to continue to just be physical when I'm on defense, continue to pressure the basketball," said Powell, who got playing time last season as the Nets' only top point-of-attack defender.

But this season, newly acquired veteran Keon Ellis fills that role as an actualized version of what Powell aspires to be.

"It's going to be fun. We'll be able to cause a lot of chaos together," Powell said of Ellis. "Him coming into the team and him being in the league for the amount of time that he's been in, it's going to be great to learn from him."

But that likely means he will lose minutes to the four-year pro.

The Nets have until Oct. 31 to decide whether to pick up Powell's $3.7 million option for next season, and they have a shooting guard glut with Ellis as well as their last two lottery picks Egor Dëmin and Mikel Brown Jr. both able to play off-ball.

"Each and every day, we're just going to come into the gym ready to work, and just at the end of the day we're competing for minutes," Powell said. "That's what brings out the best practices."

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HATE THE DRAKE? Drake Powell's Las Vegas Summer League run has been one to forget, marked by dreadful shooting — 1-for-28 from the field and 0-for-14 from 3-point range.

Getty Images

Nets to unleash lotto duo

By BRIAN LEWIS

LAS VEGAS — Egor Dëmin and Mikel Brown Jr. — the Nets' lottery picks the past two years — are set to play Tuesday's summer league tilt against Sacramento, giving Nets fans another glimpse at their potential backcourt of the future.

Both 20-year-olds were held out of Saturday's loss to Atlanta, while Brown had missed the first two of three California Classic games. But fans will relish seeing them on the floor together against the Kings.

"That's the goal," Nets summer league coach Dutch Gaitley said. "The goal is a nice off-day ... get some work in on Monday, and then we're ready to play the Kings and, hopefully, avenge our first loss of summer league."

The Nets picked Brown at No. 6 overall in last month's draft — they chose him over Darius Acuff Jr., who went one spot later to Sacramento — and the rookie had 20 points on 6-for-12 shooting and 3-for-6 from deep in the rout of the Knicks.

Meanwhile, Acuff is averaging 19.5 points and 4.5 assists. He also has averaged 3.5 turnovers on just 26-for-82 shooting along with horrific defense.

➤ Despite being used at forward this summer rather than center. **Danny Wolf** has added about 10 pounds of muscle in hopes bulk and better interior footwork help his finishing.

"It's just my physicality and just playing a little bit bigger," Wolf said of improved finishing. "Then within that, just as the game slows down, making better reads, being better with the ball, and then just playing simpler, and then just continuing to find consistency in the 3-point shot."

➤ **Nolan Traore** won't play at all in summer league due to having his right knee scoped. But he joined the Nets here and got some stationary shots up at practice Monday. **Grant Nelson** also isn't playing but was on hand getting work in at Monday's practice as well.

JUST 1 OF THE

British Open

Royal Birkdale Golf Club
Southport, England

On the air

Thursday
NBCSN/Peacock: 1:30 a.m.-4 a.m.
USA: 4 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Friday
NBCSN/Peacock: 1:30 a.m.-4 a.m.
USA: 4 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Saturday
USA: 5 a.m.-7 a.m.
NBC: 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

Sunday
USA: 4-7 a.m.
NBC: 7 a.m.-2 p.m.

FORE-CAST

Thursday
73 degrees
Sunny | 10 pct. chance of rain
Winds: SSW 9 mph

Friday
69 degrees
Sunny | 5 pct. chance of rain
Winds: SE 9 mph

Saturday
67 degrees
Sunny | 0 pct. chance of rain
Winds: ESE 9 mph

Sunday
66 degrees
Mostly cloudy
10 pct. chance of rain
Winds: SE 10 mph

Fleetwood gets hometown welcome for British Open at club in his backyard

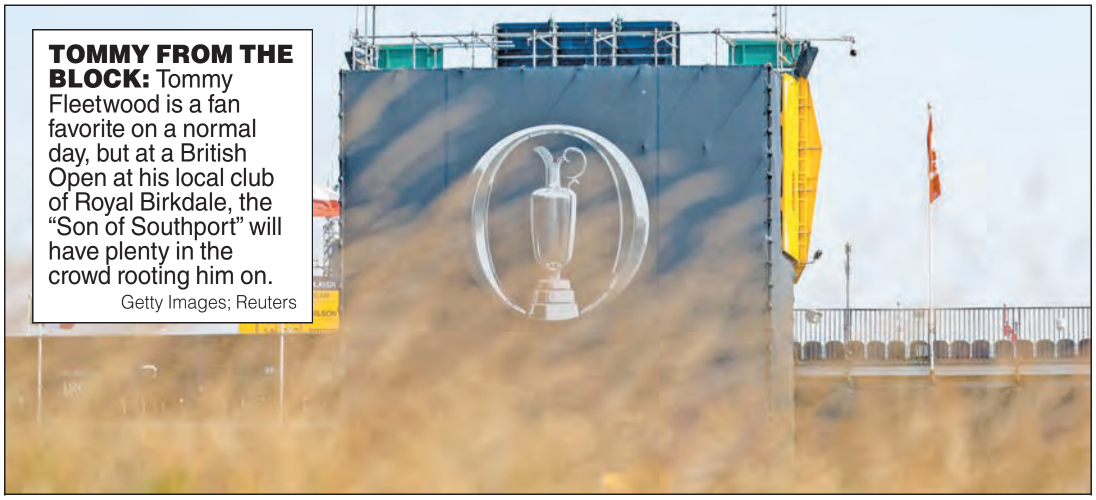
By MARK CANNIZZARO

SOUTHPORT, England — If you listen closely enough to the television broadcast of the British Open this week from Royal Birkdale, you're going to hear more than a few, "Come on, Tommy lad," chants.

That's because one of the favorites to hoist the Claret Jug this week is Tommy Fleetwood, who's a hometown lad from these parts, born and raised in Southport, on the northwest coast of England, walking distance from Birkdale.

There are images of the 35-year-old Fleetwood — the "Son of Southport," who's ranked No. 9 in the world — everywhere around Birkdale, where he and his dad, Pete, were known to sneak onto the championship course back in the day — long before Tommy became one of the biggest names in the game.

"Birkdale was always kind of hallowed turf for people that lived in Southport," Fleetwood said Monday.



TOMMY FROM THE BLOCK: Tommy Fleetwood is a fan favorite on a normal day, but at a British Open at his local club of Royal Birkdale, the "Son of Southport" will have plenty in the crowd rooting him on.
Getty Images; Reuters

Down the road from Birkdale is Formby Hall, where Fleetwood grew up playing and where his father is a member. There's a permanent parking spot in Tommy's name and an annual junior competition at the club where the winner is called the "Tommy Fleetwood Champion."

There, too, is a corner lounge of the club's bar area called the "Tommy Fleetwood Lounge," where many pints of local lager are consumed after rounds of golf.

If Fleetwood was not playing in the Open this week, he might have a complaint or two about the tournament infringing on the property of his home club, Hillside, which happens to sit adjacent to Birkdale.

The players practice ground for the tournament is actually on the practice area for Hillside, where Fleetwood has been a member since he turned pro.

"It's obviously very, very special," Fleetwood said Monday. "It's very rare to have an opportunity to play a tournament, let alone The Open, in the town where you grew up in front of fans that were all there to support you. I still have lots of memories from the 2017 Open here."

The last time the Open was played at Birkdale was nine years ago, in 2017, and that's where the "Tommy lad" chants were born, because that was, to a large extent, Fleetwood's introduction to the public eye in golf.

The Son of Southport followed a shaky opening-round 76 with a 69 to barely make the cut and then 66 and 70 on the weekend to finish in a tie for 27th. And he was as much the star of the show as the winner that week, Jordan Spieth.

At site of last major win, Spieth hopes to relive

Mark Cannizzaro

SOUTHPORT, England — You may have heard the phrase the "Jordan Spieth Experience," which is used so often it should be trademarked.

It describes the volatile nature of watching one of Spieth's rounds — a roller-coaster-ride combo platter featuring electric birdie runs, wild par saves from off the planet and mind-numbing gaffes leading to big numbers.

Never has that phrase been more apt than in the 2017 British Open at Royal Birkdale, where golf's oldest major will be played this week for the first time since then.

It was in 2017 at Birkdale where Spieth won the British Open — but only after putting himself and his ardent followers through hell.

It began with a wildly errant tee shot on the 13th hole in the final round, a drive sprayed so far right that it bounded off a spectator's head and landed on the side of a dune.

After a search for the ball that included spectators, the ball was found in a lie so buried in the tall fescue grass he needed to take a drop for an unplayable lie. Spieth then waited for a rules official to allow him to drop in the driving range, which was somehow not deemed out of bounds.

After a 22-minute ordeal and with playing partner Matt Kuchar patiently waiting in the 13th fairway to hit his second shot, Spieth, now with a good lie on short grass, somehow saved bogey when a triple seemed likely.

"Yeah, it's come up probably more than any other hole I've ever played," Spieth said Monday. "I remember getting the most out of it and making a bogey there and feeling like I stole a shot back somehow."

Spieth played practice rounds Saturday, Sunday and Monday and said, "It was fun to stand on that tee and just kind of be like, 'Wow, some stuff really hit the fan last time I was standing on this tee from here on in.' It was the start of a crazy six-hole stretch."

A stretch that left him hoisting the Claret Jug by day's end.

Moments after that madness on 13, on the par-3 14th hole, Spieth dropped a bomb of a birdie putt and, in the moment, looked at his caddie, Michael Greller, and said, "Go get that," referring to the ball in the cup as he walked off the green.

Those two holes in that Open — 13 and 14 — perfectly defined the "Jordan Spieth Experience." He went from looking like he was going to blow a second major championship in 15 months, after blowing a five-shot lead with nine holes to play at the 2016 Masters, to winning the Claret Jug.

The twist to holes 13 and 14 this year is that both have changed significantly for this Open.

The right side of 13 is now staked as out of bounds, because the practice range has been moved and that area is now a fan village.

And No. 14 is no longer the par 3 Spieth birdied. The 14th is now a par 5 and No. 15 has been changed to a par 3.

Asked if he ever questioned "them" why they built a new 14th hole, Spieth laughed and said, "I don't know who the 'them' would be, so no, I didn't have any input … nor would I have expected to have any input."

It's no laughing matter that Spi-

LADS

There's been an argument that perhaps the pressure to perform in front of his home fans might outweigh the pleasure it'll be to play in front of them for Fleetwood. He doesn't buy into that.

"You can't hide from it," he said. "There's no way I can underplay it. If I just go back to the original me being an 8-year-old kid, the thought of playing in an Open at Birkdale was unbelievably special. You own how much you want it. So, if you're not going to enjoy it, then you've kind of let yourself down in that sense. I'm just excited for the opportunity to play in front of everybody.

"At the end of the day, as much as it means to me — and I would never play it down how big it feels to play an Open at Birkdale and how amazing it would be to win an Open — but it is still like a game of golf and people would dream of being in the situation I'm in. It's still important to remember that and enjoy it."

Fleetwood has one PGA Tour victory — at the 2025 Tour Championship. He's been a consistent machine this year, with five top 10 finishes, including three in the top 5. In his last 15 starts, he's finished in the top 15.

His best finish in an Open was runner-up in 2019 at Portrush, and he finished tied for fourth in 2022 at St. Andrews. Maybe this is the week he breaks through and wins a first major. In his hometown of all places.

"Dreams do come true," Fleetwood said. "We watch it all the time. But you'll never find out if yours will unless you chase it. Mine might come true. It might not. I think I've done a lot in my career so far, but yeah, there's still plenty more to go."

The most prominent image of Fleetwood in the area is a 50-meter-tall mural of him on the wall of the Southport & Birkdale Sports Club, painted by an acclaimed local street artist named Paul Curtis.

"Golf is a very individual sport, and I feel like I spend my life, as every other golfer does, chasing your goals and your dreams, and you do that sort of on a very individual basis," Fleetwood said. "I've always been very lucky with support all around the world, but then to see people very much emotionally invested in you and showing things like that, I think it's very special. It definitely doesn't go unnoticed by me."

Fleetwood is one of the most popular players among golf fans, but among his fellow players, too.

"I don't know anyone who would say a bad word about Tommy, he's such a great guy," fellow Englishman Matt Fitzpatrick said Monday.

"Come on, Tommy lad."

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the 'Experience'

eth has won just twice since that memorable week in '17 at Birkdale, a number that he conceded he's "quite frustrated" with because he feels like he's played "better than my results have shown."

"I feel like I have a lot of great golf in front of me," Spieth, now 32, said. "I feel like I'm way more optimistic than I've been at a lot of different points in my career. Knowing me, when the lid pops off the hole, I feel like I can go on a run about as hot as anybody can run."

That, of course, would play right into the "Spieth Experience."

It, too, would be great for golf, because when Spieth is playing well, the sport is better for it.

Spieth balked when asked if he needed to accept that he peaked early and might never reach those heights again.

"I'll never believe that until I'm at a point in my career where my health or whatever would be [compromised], because if you give up on reaching your ceiling, then I don't see a point in playing anymore," Spieth said. "So, for me it's always about [doing] everything I can to be at the very best in the world, because I know that I can be. I have been. It's nice to have the blueprint.

"There should be nothing to stop me in my own head to be able to search and believe that I can reach that again."

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FORWARD THINKING: France's potent attack, which features (from left) Kylian Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé and Michael Olise, could leave it exposed to an offensive explosion from a powerhouse Spain team. Getty Images

France's attack could open up door for Spain

By ETHAN SEARS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Didier Deschamps buried the most revealing sentence of his news conference Monday toward the end of a long answer about the dynamic between his two left wingers, but there it was all the same.

"I am not changing my tacics based on the opponent, o," Deschamps said in ench, according to an inrpreter.

Provided Deschamps was telling the truth, that is a crucial piece of information before France faces a Spanish side Tuesday afternoon that seems to have the capability to change the game state on which Les Bleus have premised their entire World Cup.

Going with four attackers up front as a way of shoehorning as much of their prodigious talent as possible onto the field was a bold stroke from Deschamps at the start of this tournament. The foursome of Kylian Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé, Michael Olise and one of Désiré Doué or Bradley Barcola is as much an embarrassment of riches as any team has had in recent memory.

They have allowed France to control every game it's played so far at this World Cup; never once has Deschamps' side looked out of control. Mbappé is tied with Lionel Messi atop the Golden Boot race. He, Dembélé and Olise could all end up Ballon d'Or finalists if France goes on to win its second World Cup in eight years.

Against Spain, though, keeping that foursome together seems to present considerable risk, for La Roja are perhaps the only team left in the tournament that can own the ball — and thus decide how the game is played — against a team of France's quality.

Deschamps did play the foursome together last year in the Nations League semifinal against Spain, which became a wide-open 5-4 Spanish win. Assuming that is how they line up Tuesday, it is a statement that Deschamps believes he can force Luis de la Fuente's Spain to shift, as opposed to the other way around.

Or, at least, he believes that his attack can hurt Spain in transition as much as Spain's possession can hurt France.

"We know that, historically, Spain has always played a possession game, even if it hurts you in transition," France defender Jules Koundé said. "We, too, are a team that is comfortable playing with the ball. And we can also play a bit further down and exploit [the opponent] in transition, because we have a lot of quality to play like that. So you have to take into account that tomorrow, we will have to have the ball, because against Spain, you cannot leave the ball [for them over] 90 minutes."

➤ Deschamps said that Aurélien Tchouaméni will be available Tuesday, though he stopped short of saying the midfielder is 100 percent after missing the past two games with a groin injury.

COLOR WAR

Battle between Les Bleus, La Roja feels like the real World Cup final

By MICHAEL DUARTE

ARLINGTON, Texas — The Soccer gods owe us an apology.

The match the world has been waiting to see is not the World Cup final.

Instead, it is Tuesday's semifinal beneath the roof of Dallas Stadium, where reigning European champion Spain collides with a reborn France team that has looked unstoppable throughout the tournament.

For many, Spain vs. France is the real World Cup final.

Sure, the winner will play in the final against either defending champion Argentina or England, but make no mistake: The tournament's two best teams are meeting in the semifinal.

And they have looked every bit like the pretournament co-favorites to lift the trophy through their first six matches.

Spain arrives at the semifinal unbeaten in its past 36 matches, just one victory shy of tying Italy's all-time record. Luis de la Fuente's side has conceded just one goal all tournament and has dominated possession in every match. La Roja have suffocated their opponents like an anaconda strangles its prey with a midfield orchestrated by Dani Olmo, Rodri and Pedri (or Fabián Ruiz). They even have the tournament's greatest super sub in Mikel Merino, who became the first substitute in World Cup history to score back-to-back game-winning goals in the knockout stage.

But France has been just as terrifying.

Didier Deschamps' squad has scored 16 goals in six matches, second only to Argentina, and won five of its six games by two or more goals. Les Bleus are playing in their third consecutive World Cup semifinal and a victory Tuesday might cement them as the greatest international dynasty we have ever seen.

France's attack is an avalanche of three of the best goal scorers in the world in Kylian Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé and Michael Olise.

Their showdown Tuesday is an irresistible clash of styles.

Spain wants the ball. France just wants an opportunity.

"We need to try and impose our game," said Spanish manager Luis de la Fuente. "We have completely different playing styles. We have to be careful with France's counterattacks. Their transitions are very devastating."

La Roja will attempt to dictate the rhythm through their midfield triangle, forcing France's forwards to defend for long stretches while fullbacks Pedro Porro and Marc Cucurella stretch the field from the flanks.

France will likely allow this to happen, patiently waiting for one misplaced pass before unleashing Mbappé, Dembélé and Olise into the acres of open space left in the Spanish fullbacks' wake.

It's a game of chess played at 100 mph.

"If France should fear anyone, it's us," 18-year-old sensation Lamine Yamal said after Spain eliminated Belgium in the quarterfinal. "We have knocked them out before. We have beat them two times. Honestly, I think we're the two best teams at the World Cup, so we'll see what happens, but we do not have any fear."

He's right. Spain has beaten France their past two meetings, first in the Euro 2024 semifinal and in a 5-4 classic in the Nations League last year.

"We have a different team. There's been a lot of changes since then," said French midfielder Warren Zaïre-Emery. "We are ready. We want to win and get our revenge from the Euro. We're going to deliver tomorrow."

Zaïre-Emery and his teammates in the midfield may ultimately decide whether his proclamation becomes true.

Ousmane Dembélé

"It's going to be a very beautiful game between the two best teams in the world," said Spanish midfielder Álex Baena. "We've played against them many times, we've won, and hopefully we'll do it again."

Easier said than done.

"We know the four players up top are most comfortable when they have the ball moving offensively," he said. "We'll try to have possession and have as few turnovers as possible so we don't give the advantage to our opponent."

Spain enters the match with one less day of rest, but won't use that as an excuse.

"We knew before the World Cup what we signed up for," Baena said. "When you get closer to the end your legs can feel it a little, but these are not excuses."

Oddsmakers still see almost nothing separating these giants, with France installed as a slight favorite. To further hammer the point, the winner would be an even bigger favorite in the final against either England or Argentina.

In soccer, anything can happen. One goal, one mistake can make the difference. Argentina still has Lionel Messi. England has Jude Bellingham and Harry Kane.

But unless something extraordinary happens, the likely World Cup champion will be walking off the field Tuesday wearing either blue or red.

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Kylian Mbappé

SEMIFINAL
FRA Tues. 3 p.m. Dallas ESP

WORLD CUP FINAL
Sun. 3 p.m. NY/NJ
FRA/ESP ENG/ARG

SEMIFINAL
ENG Wed. 3 p.m. Atlanta ARG

THIRD-PLACE GAME Saturday, 5 p.m., Miami

ALL GAMES ON FOX

Getty Images (2); Imagn Images (2)

Yamal, 19, not backing down

By MICHAEL DUARTE

Mikel Merino

ARLINGTON, Texas — Most 19-year-olds celebrate birthdays with friends, cake and presents. But Spanish superstar Lamine Yamal spent his speaking to hundreds of reporters from all over the world less than 24 hours before the biggest game of his life.

"Thank you all for coming to my birthday party," Yamal said with a smile when he sat down for his prematch press conference Monday.

Yamal turned 19 on the eve of Spain's blockbuster World Cup semifinal against France. The timing only adds another layer to the remarkable rise of the Barcelona phenom, whose combination of swagger, creativity and fearlessness has drawn inevitable comparisons to Lionel Messi, the player many in Catalonia have long hoped would someday have a successor.

Yamal has collected multiple Man of the Match honors during Spain's march to the semifinals despite producing just one goal and no assists. His fingerprints are everywhere even when they don't appear on the scoresheet.

"I'm not concerned with scoring or not scoring," Yamal said. "All tournaments are different. It's not because of the national team coach or tactics that I haven't scored. I'm not concerned because we are winning. Growing up I watched Spain get kicked out of the competition. I want us to go deep into the tournament. Hopefully tomorrow I can score another goal."

His confidence has become nearly as captivating as his left foot.

After Spain eliminated Belgium, Yamal declared France should fear Spain, not the other way around, pointing to Spain's victories over Les Bleus in the semifinals of the Euros and Nations League, respectively.

"They asked me if I feared France and I said no," Yamal said. "We are European champions and we don't fear anyone."

France never took the bait.

"We don't fear anyone either," midfielder Adrien Rabiot said.

Defender Jules Koundé, Yamal's teammate at Barcelona, dismissed the remarks as competitive confidence.

"We never felt a lack of respect from his comments," Kounde said. "For me, it's a show of confidence. He trusts a lot in the virtues of the team in which he plays."

French midfielder Warren Zaïre-Emery broadened the conversation beyond Spain's teenage sensation.

"Before talking about Lamine Yamal, we should talk about all of Spain," Zaïre-Emery said. "They have world-class players in every position."

Even France manager Didier Deschamps acknowledged the challenge.

"He's part of the players who can really make a difference on the pitch," Deschamps said. "When it comes to one-versus-one, it could be tough."

The World Cup has also turned Yamal into an American phenomenon.

Lamine Yamal

The city of Chattanooga, Tenn., where Spain made its base camp, has embraced him, while national advertising campaigns with McDonald's, Gatorade and Adidas have introduced him to millions of new fans.

"It's great and something beautiful," Yamal said. "Football has given me the opportunity to become well known in Chattanooga. I would have never imagined going out for a walk in the U.S. and for people to know me. I'm very proud of that."

MATCHUPS

By ETHAN SEARS

ARLINGTON, Texas — The World Cup's most compelling tactical matchup is here.

All tournament long, France has looked like the best team. And all tournament long, Spain has grown into itself, looking more and more like the team that knocked off Les Bleus each of the past two years, first in the Euro 2024 semifinal, then in a UEFA Nations League semi last year.

This time, the stakes couldn't be bigger with a spot in the World Cup final on the line.

The Post breaks down the World Cup semifinal between Spain and France.

WHEN FRANCE HAS THE BALL

Didier Deschamps is surely the coach with more to consider in this matchup. France, which has set up with four attackers throughout the tournament, now faces a team in Spain that figures to possess the ball more than it and whose three-man midfield of Dani Olmo, Pedri (or Fabián Ruiz) and Rodri will have a numerical advantage over Adrien Rabiot and Manu Koné (or Aurélien Tchouaméni). That could force Deschamps to consider adjusting the uber-aggressive 4-2-3-1 in which his team has set up all tournament, even midgame if need be.

France's two central midfielders, whoever it is that Deschamps picks, will have crucial roles to play. Spain has been the best counter-pressing team in the World Cup, but its fullbacks, Pedro Porro and Marc Cucurella, both push high up the field and there is danger of leaving space in behind for Ousmane Dembélé or Désiré Doué on the counterattack. Line-breaking passes from Rabiot and Koné, and their decisiveness on the ball, will be critical in those moments.

If France can solve that counterpress, it may change the very shape of the game in its favor. Without significant ball possession, what does Spain look like and how might Luis de la Fuente adjust? When these teams met in the Nations League last year, France had 57 percent of the ball and the result was a far more open game than the Euro 2024 semifinal between them. Still, it ended in a 5-4 Spanish victory, as opposed to the 2-1 a summer before.

France's front four are beyond anything Spain has. Kylian Mbappé, Michael Olise, Dembélé and Bradley Barcola — with Doué coming off the bench until Deschamps swapped him and Barcola in the quarterfinal — present a problem to which no opponent has come up with an adequate answer. Spain, at least on paper, will try to make this a midfield battle and force Deschamps to rethink the premise by which he's operated the entire tournament.

His response to that will dictate so much. If you are likening it to a chess game, it does seem that France is white, and needs to think carefully about the first move.

WHEN SPAIN HAS THE BALL

With respect to Aymeric Laporte, Pau Cubarsí and Unai Simón, Spain's defensive success in this tournament has had less to do with them and more with its relentless ball possession. At 66 percent, per FotMob, no team has held onto the ball more than La Roja in this tournament.

Spain's short passes and deliberate nature bring to mind its 2010 midfield that won the country's sole World Cup. That team also set up in a 4-2-3-1, won game after game 1-0 and brought forth accusations of being boring.

If de la Fuente's side controls the ball the way it has the rest of the tournament, it can overload France in the midfield and go from there. France's front four will be forced to shoulder more defensive responsibility, unless Deschamps changes the shape entirely. Eventually, space will open up in behind for Lamine Yamal, Alex Baena and Mikel Oyarzabal to run into.

The questions for Spain are how it will set up in midfield, having started Fabian Ruiz over Pedri against Belgium, and how much de la Fuente will allow his fullbacks to get up the field given the counterattacking threat from France's front line. Keeping the same game state that it's had throughout the tournament, though, feels crucial for Spain.

INTANGIBLES

Spain has beaten France in both of their last two meetings, and starting from Yamal, has indicated it won't be cowed by Les Bleus. Likewise, though, France won't have trouble handling the pressure given its extensive experience on stages like this. There's not likely to be a significant crowd advantage for either team and an indoor field means that heat won't play a factor.

PREDICTION

Deschamps solves the puzzle. **France 3-2** after extra time.

Mets are wasting Soto's Amazin' first years in Queens

NOT WHAT THEY JUAN-TED

ONE-MAN SHOW: Juan Soto has played about as well as the Mets could have hoped after they lured him away from the crosstown rival Yankees. For the team itself, it's been the inverse as it failed to qualify for the playoffs a year ago and sits nearly at the bottom of the National League standings at the All-Star break. Getty Images

Joel Sherman

REMEMBER the winning streak the Mets were on?

The way last season ended and this season has gone through the All-Star break makes it all seem longer ago.

But the Mets were enjoying the euphoria of a surprise run to the 2024 NL Championship Series, which gave off the buzz that in their first year together, Steve Cohen, David Stearns and Carlos Mendoza finally had provided the Mets the right owner/head of baseball operations/manager unit to sustain winning in a way foreign to the organization.

Then, in what felt like a pinch-me-is-this-real moment, the Mets not only gave the largest contract ever to Juan Soto but did so by outbidding and grabbing him away from the Yankees, a win-win double that seemed to symbolize a transformational moment not just for the organization but for New York baseball.

If at that juncture, you had no other information but that Soto would finish third for National League MVP in his first Queens season and, let's say, someplace in the top 10 in 2026 — since he reached the All-Star break second in the league in both on-base and slugging percentage — what would your guess be for how the Mets performed?

That it is going to be two of the most disappointing seasons for a franchise addicted to them accentuates an additional Mets problem — Soto is doing exactly what was dreamed he would upon signing for 15 years at $765 million. Yet, the Mets are in the midst of squandering two of the best offensive years in their history in his age-26 and age-27 seasons.

For example, in his lone Yankees season, Soto finished third for American League MVP, and they went to the World Series. The Mets are 123-136 since, missing the playoffs on the final day of last season and all but being eliminated already this year with Soto fittingly their lone All-Star.

"It leaves you confused to a degree a little bit. Like, what is the missing piece?" said Clay Holmes, Soto's teammate with the 2024 Yankees and the Mets since. "It's obviously not a superstar. It could be head-scratching. I don't think it is one thing that is the reason why [the team has not flourished around Soto's success]. Juan has done incredibly. But obviously, there have been some things that have not worked out."

Francisco Lindor said, "He's done great, so I don't want to say, 'waste [his performance].' I feel like the relationship [as a group] continues to build. We have had downs, but we're building toward something great. I do feel like he's a guy that helps put a lot of things together, and for some reason, we just have not played to his level. But I think it's a matter of time. And when it comes to trying, he's got 10 more years of trying."

Does he?

Soto has the right to opt out of his contract after the 2029 season, though the Mets can negate that by increasing his 2030-39 annual salary from $46 million to $50 million.

As part of the recruitment of Soto, Cohen told the lefty-hitting savant he sees winning two to four championships in their first 10 years together. Now, there will be eight years to do that.

Soto is not going anywhere. He has expressed the desire to stay. Recently on "The Show with Joel Sherman and Jon Heyman," Cohen said that neither Soto nor Lindor would be traded at this deadline. Both have complete no-trade clauses. Also, there is a strong potential for payroll rules to change drastically via the current collective bargaining agreement as MLB seeks a salary cap. Thus, any interested teams would probably want to know the edicts before even considering taking on the 13 years at $596.25 million Soto is owed after this season or the five at $160 million due Lindor.

As opposed to Soto, Lindor at 32 is possibly in decline. He finished 10th for NL MVP last year. But after playing the majors' third-most games from 2022-25 (Pete Alonso was second, Soto fourth), Lindor missed two months with a calf injury and, in 33 games, was hitting .216 and neither fielding nor exhibiting the high baseball IQ of his recent past. When asked before Sunday's first-half finale why the Mets were struggling, Lindor blamed himself, then drove in two runs but also booted what would have been a game-ending double-play grounder — and the Red Sox rallied to beat the Mets 3-2 in 10 innings.

Lindor would not comment on whether he would waive his no-trade clause, but, again, Cohen said he is going nowhere, and there are the complications of his poor year combined with his contract. Plus, he spoke optimistically about what Cohen and Stearns were building. And Cohen has said that it is with Soto and Lindor as anchors.

To that end, the Mets will hope that what they are seeing from Carson Benge and A.J. Ewing is just an appetizer and that they join Soto to form a long-term impact outfield.

And they hope that there is no deviation for Soto. He not only hit a career-best 43 homers last year but led the NL with 38 steals. This season, he trails only Washington's James Wood in the NL in on-base percentage (.410 to .405) and slugging (.575 to .562) — Wood was a key to the package from the Padres to the Nationals to acquire Soto four deadlines ago.

Now, Soto's Mets trail the Nationals and nearly every other NL team. That, plus missing 16 games with his own calf injury, could keep Soto from a fourth straight top six MVP finish. But that would be about him being dragged down in voting by the Mets' poor play, even while he continues to rise above the mess.

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Mets FIRST-HALF REPORT CARD

BY MIKE PUMA

The Mets' season is essentially over at the All-Star break following 3 ½ months of embarrassingly bad baseball.

Aside from a competent bullpen — at least in front of Devin Williams — it's been a horror show, which led to Carlos Mendoza becoming the first manager fired in-season by the club since 2008.

Much change is forthcoming (David Peterson's trade to the Cubs last month was just the first of many purges to expect by Aug. 3).

Now a look at the team's mostly disappointing All-Star break grades.

Juan Soto A

The one constant in the Mets lineup. If anybody can catch Shohei Ohtani in the MVP race, it's Soto.

Luke Weaver A

He's been Mr. Automatic over the past 2 ½ months. Among David Stearns' offseason additions, this one has worked out best.

Huascar Brazobán A-

Dependable and durable. The right-hander has excelled in a variety of roles.

Brooks Raley A-

Lefty excels at pitching to soft contact. No signs of slowing at age 38.

A.J. Minter A-

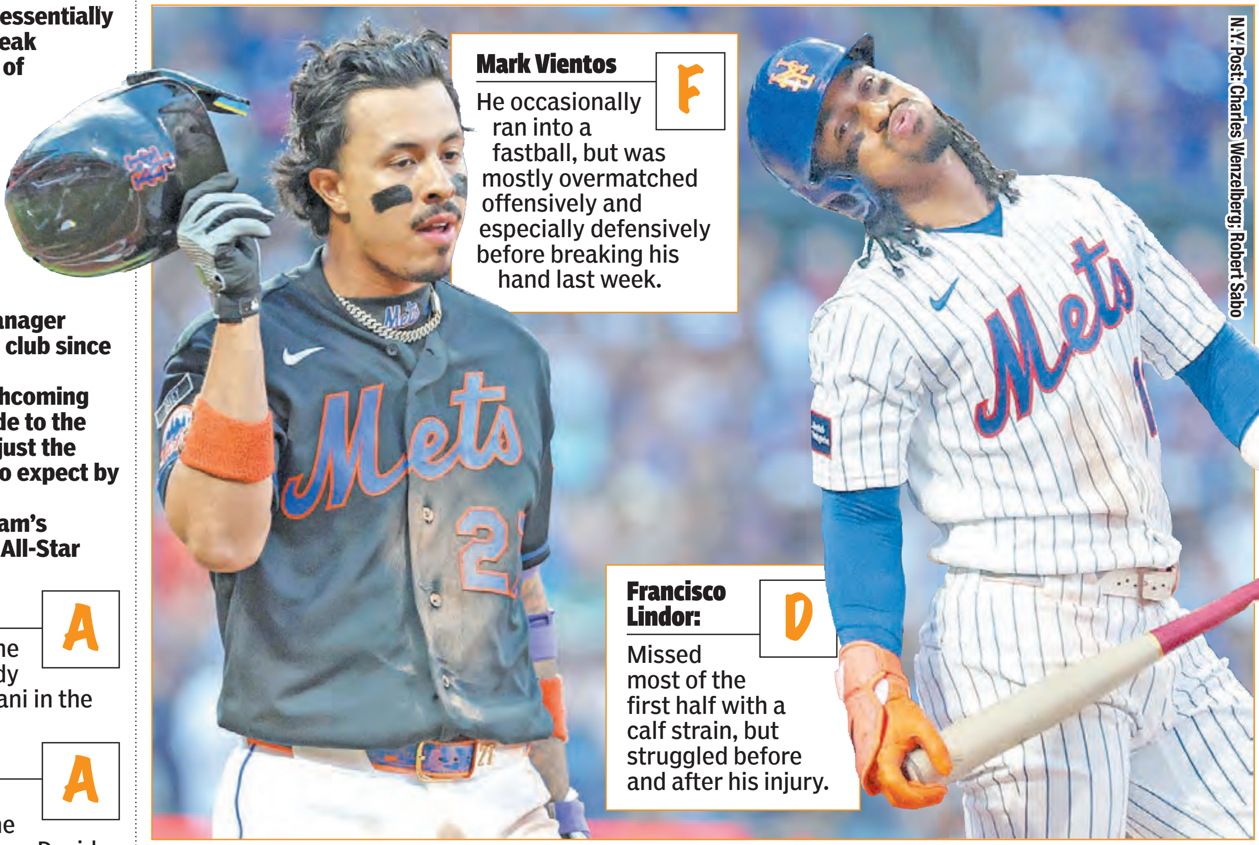
Returned from lat surgery to give the Mets a second quality lefty relief option.

Carson Benge B+

Other than the occasional defensive lapse, the rookie is just about everything the Mets could have wanted ever since his Opening Day home run.

A.J. Ewing B+

Exciting rookie whose bat has finally caught up with his defense and base stealing.



N.Y. Post: Charles Wenzelberg; Robert Sabo

Mark Vientos F

He occasionally ran into a fastball, but was mostly overmatched offensively and especially defensively before breaking his hand last week.

Francisco Lindor: D

Missed most of the first half with a calf strain, but struggled before and after his injury.

Jared Young B

Providing stability at first base, both with a sneaky-productive bat and solid glovework.

Nolan McLean B

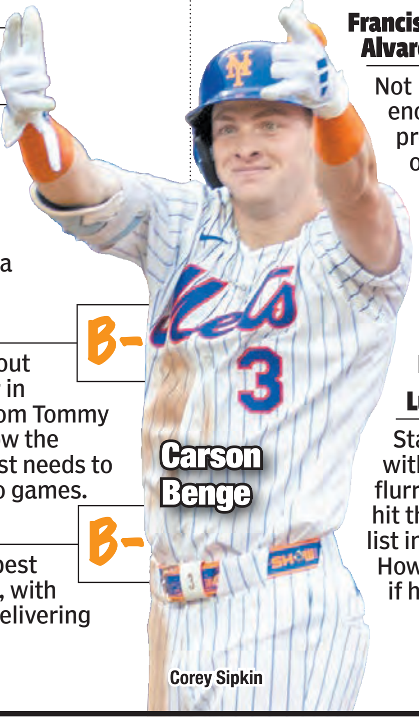
Still short of the ace-like force the Mets were expecting, but appears on the right track after a few letdowns.

Christian Scott B-

Plenty to like about the right-hander in his comeback from Tommy John surgery. Now the young pitcher just needs to work deeper into games.

Luis Torrens B-

Still among the best behind the plate, with a penchant for delivering the big hit.



Carson Benge

Corey Sipkin

Bo Bichette C+

Better late than never? The Mets could have used some hits from him in April and May.

Francisco Alvarez C

Not enough production offensively to justify his regression behind the plate. A decent DH option, but the Mets have many.

Luis Robert Jr. C

Started with a flurry, but hit the injured list in late April. How does he fit if he returns?

Austin Warren C

Pitched the team out of tough spots for a stretch before regressing to the pitcher who has bounced between Triple-A and the big leagues.

Sean Manaea C

Gradual improvement since the season started after he was buried in the bullpen, but probably not enough to bring the Mets much value in a trade.

Tyrone Taylor C-

May have lost a step in the outfield, and offense has never been part of his game.

Devin Williams D

A disappointing overall performance for Edwin Díaz's replacement, who has pitched to a 4.70 ERA and blown three saves. When he's off, he's ugly bad.

Ronny Mauricio D

Lost a chance to get regular playing time due to a fractured thumb and appears lost at the plate.

Tobias Myers D

Right-hander was excellent early but lost his mojo over the past 1 ½ months. Now he is stuck bouncing between Triple-A and the majors.

Freddy Peralta F

The Mets thought they had an ace, but for whatever reason he hasn't approached that level. Short starts and a 4.66 ERA are a bad combination.

Kodai Senga F

Just a complete disaster. It's hard to justify a roster spot for the right-hander these days.

Brett Baty F

Thrust into an everyday role due to injuries, he was overexposed. Team needs much better than a .611 OPS from him.

Marcus Semien F

Declining range at second base and underwhelming production offensively. He is still under contract for the next two seasons.

Jorge Polanco F

He was injured for most of the first half and unproductive when he played. Not looking great for $40 million over two years.

Andy Green C

Thrust into an impossible spot following Mendoza's firing. It's tough to say what kind of manager he might be based on two weeks.

David Stearns F

The architect of this nightmare. His misses on this roster far outweigh his hits.

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Jon Heyman

AT THE ALL-STAR GAME

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ONLY GAME IN TOWN

Despite ASG's dominance, still ways for it to improve

Getty Images

MAKE IT SHINE: MLB's All-Star Game is the only one that matters but still can be improved upon.

PHILADELPHIA — The MLB All-Star Game continues to rule over all other All-Star Games. Of course, the other All-Star Games rank somewhere between pathetic and an utter waste of time.

The NBA All-Star Game is a more-boring version of their slam-dunk competition, with barely more defense.

The defunct NFL Pro Bowl, for those who didn't notice, has transitioned to a flag football exhibition. And basically no one has noticed.

So MLB is working from a position of strength here. But MLB's All-Star Game, to be played here Tuesday, still could be better. Here's how:

1. Require players to stay the whole game, so there isn't a repeat of last year, when AL Manager Aaron Boone had so few viable options left for the new tie-breaking home run "swing-off" he must have considered inserting himself into the lineup. (To compensate players for staying late, provide an extra day's rest via an added off-day where only the MLB draft is held. The draft should have its own day anyway, and not have to compete with 15 games.)

2. Allow players to be reinserted so only the very best players are in game-deciding spots.

3. Play the biggest stars all game. Shohei Ohtani and Aaron Judge should never come out. Unfortunately, neither is here this time, Judge for a broken rib that's due to undergo more imagining and Ohtani for a knee that's due to be drained.

Ohtani has continued to rake, but you can't blame him for prioritizing his Dodgers team, and we aren't about to question his toughness or will (both are obviously high). Still, it's a shame MLB's biggest star (and second biggest star) is absent. "He's good, and should be ready to go Friday," Ohtani's agent Nez Balelo said by text.

4. Make the deadline for player voting later. It was June 28 this year, and it's no wonder players got a couple wrong as they don't have crystal balls, leaving out deserving pitchers Zack Wheeler and Sonny Gray.

It's silly Wheeler, who's 10-1 with a 2.13 ERA, and Gray, who's 11-1 on a losing team with a 2.54 ERA, weren't voted onto the team. Wheeler, probably MLB's best pitcher since he left the Mets nine years ago, called his early non-inclusion "BS." (That said, Wheeler should have accepted MLB's later invite even if he felt "disrespected" for being the "fifth choice," as he told Charlotte Varnes of The Athletic.)

5. Don't let the All-Star starting pitcher be selected by his own manager, who's understandably more apt to pick his own guy. Let the league make the choice. As great as Dylan Cease is, Cam Schlittler should be starting.

6. Base the Home Run Derby on time again, rather than swings. It was more exciting to see players racing against the clock.

7. Allow metal bats in the Home Run Derby so balls will fly. "I love the idea ... There probably would be guys leaving the stadium," Mike Trout said.

8. Make sure the biggest sluggers are in the Home Run Derby. Great job by Kyle Schwarber and Bryce Harper to participate this year here at their home, Citizens Bank Park, saving that worthy sideshow.

Trout and Buxton both say they're staying

TEAMS LOOKING for a center fielder will have to look beyond All-Stars **Byron Buxton** and **Mike Trout**. Both suggested they aren't going anywhere.

"Nah," Buxton said when asked whether he'd leave the Twins. "Which is why I got the no-trade."

He wouldn't even consider waiving it for his home-state Braves?

"At the end of the day, Atlanta ain't home," Buxton said. "I'm five hours from Atlanta. People don't get that. I'm from the South. I'm closer to Savannah. I'm closer to Jacksonville than I am to Atlanta. That's not home.

"And two, I got family," Buxton continued. "My family loves Minnesota. It's a special place, not only for me but for my family. You're not just moving me. You're moving my family. And you're moving what we have built in Minnesota."

Trout seems no more anxious to leave the Angels.

He said, "I got the no-trade clause. It's obviously my decision. That's where it's at."

Trout is loyal, and he apparently also likes the idea of a career with only one team.

On that score, Trout, a Philadelphia-area product, said, "I was a big [**Derek**] **Jeter** fan growing up."

Yankees best targets: Miller and Jeffers

THE YANKEES' top two deadline targets should be All-Star closer **Mason Miller**, the game's top closer, and Twins catcher **Ryan Jeffers**.

The 48-48 Padres are waiting to see how they play out of the break before determining if they're a buyer or a seller. If they sell, they are apt to consider anything.

"As long as I'm not on a contract, it's going to be talked about every single year," Miller said.

The Yankees are expected to check in on Rockies All-Star catcher **Hunter Goodman**, but they can't be optimistic the Rockies would deal Goodman, who has three years to go before free agency.

There's no guarantee the Twins would deal Jeffers (.942 OPS), either, but he's a free agent after the year and they haven't tried to extend him.

"He's a really good team player, and he's taken his game to another level," Twins teammate **Joe Ryan**, the All-Star starter, said.

Ryan also could go in trades. But word is the 48-49 Twins are debating their situation, too.

"If something happens, it happens. But it's out of our control," Ryan said. "Hopefully, guys are coming our way." ...

The Rays, Cubs and Braves are expected to be among other prime players for two-time Cy Young winner **Tarik Skubal**, a free agent after the year.

The Phillies seek two relievers and a starter. Don't rule them out of anything, not with their aggressive GM **Dave Dombrowski**.

There's no evidence the Yankees will make more than the obligatory call for Skubal.

At least for now, the Dodgers seem less inclined to dip into their great prospect stash for a rental, even a great rental.

The Tigers' recent hot streak means they aren't guaranteed to move Skubal. But many rival execs think they should.

Perhaps that's wishful thinking?

"They have to trade him," one rival exec said. "They're not going to win the World Series. Teams would be lining up for him. What are they going to do, let him walk out the door?"

With the Tigers winning nine of 12, not everyone is sure Skubal will go now, though.

YANKEE STADIUM

Yankees FIRST-HALF REPORT CARD

BY GREG JOYCE

If the Yankees had been given their report card last month, their grades might look a bit different. Then their annual summer swoon happened, with most of the lineup slumping at the same time and doing some damage to many of their individual grades before they finished the first half on a high note.

Here are their grades at the break:

Ben Rice

A+

The lefty slugger has emerged as one of the best hitters in the sport, crushing 29 home runs and posting a .971 OPS, both of which rank third in the majors. His defense at first base remains a work in progress, but his bat has been MVP-like.

Brent Headrick

A

What a revelation the lefty reliever has been, pitching to a 1.55 ERA in 47 appearances — increasingly more important as the season went on.

Cody Bellinger

A-

The five-tool player has been mostly strong in all areas of the game, though his extended slump during the recent teamwide tailspin was poorly timed. But on the whole, he has been exactly what the Yankees hoped when re-signing him, with his defense in left field especially good.

David Bednar

A-

After a rocky start, following his participation in the WBC, Bednar has been nails of late, carrying a 19-inning scoreless streak into the break.

Aaron Judge

A-

The back-to-back AL MVP didn’t look quite like himself in May, which it turns out was due to a stress fracture in his right rib. The Yankees’ playoff fate may depend on if and when he returns in the second half.

Max Fried

A-

The left-hander was pitching well before getting hurt in May, but he has a chance to be back in early August to give the rotation a lift.

Paul Goldschmidt

A-

This would have been an A had he not gone through an 0-for-34 skid recently. Still, the veteran has played a huge role stepping up in Giancarlo Stanton’s absence. Who could have expected him to be third on the Yankees with 15 home runs?

Fernando Cruz

B+

Some occasional hiccups with his command have gotten him in trouble, but mostly he has been an effective fireman out of the bullpen.

Trent Grisham

B+

The center fielder may not completely replicate his career year from last season, but he has shown it was not a fluke, either. His impact was especially felt during an IL stint, but he brings a steadiness in the leadoff spot and center.

Paul Blackburn

B+

Somewhat quietly, the former starter has turned into a useful bullpen option, getting more high-leverage action as the season has gone along.

Max Schuemann

B

Almost every time he gets into a game, the utility player finds a way to make his impact felt. Most importantly, he has shown a knack for getting on base (.397 OBP)

Gerrit Cole

B

In nine starts since returning from Tommy John surgery, the veteran has looked like his vintage self at times and a pitcher coming back from serious elbow surgery at others.

Carlos Rodón

B

Between two stints on the IL, the lefty pitched to a 3.30 ERA in nine starts, though the Yankees could use him pitching deeper into games.

Will Warren

B-

The right-hander has allowed three earned runs or fewer in 16 of his 19 starts. He was especially good early on but needs to better control lefty hitters.

Ryan Weathers

B-

Already tying a career-high with 18 starts, the lefty has shown flashes of dominance with some clunkers mixed in. He may be bullpen-bound once the rotation is fully healthy.

José Caballero

B-

Played well enough at shortstop in April to keep the starting job before getting hurt, then returned to a super-utility role (because of injuries elsewhere) with mixed results. Has hit a career-high 10 homers with 22 steals.

Amed Rosario

B-

The veteran utility player had some big hits early on against lefties but oddly has hit better overall against righties. His defense at third base has been an issue.

Ryan McMahon

C+

He had a rough start offensively but has been a pretty steady contributor since while bringing top-notch defense at third base.

Jazz Chisholm Jr.

C+

The pending free agent got off to a brutal start and has spent the time since alternating between looking like he is back to himself and struggling. Has 13 homers and 26 steals, but his tantalizing talent has often been overshadowed by some self-inflicted mistakes.

Ryan Yarbrough

C+

Serving as something of a long man in the bullpen — and more recently, a left-on-left specialist — the veteran has been fine.

Jasson Domínguez

C

Filling a need in right field after coming back from a shoulder injury, Domínguez’s defense has left plenty to be desired. But he has looked more viable from both sides of the plate, even if he has yet to fully take off.

Anthony Volpe

C

Since he got called up following offseason shoulder surgery and being briefly optioned, his on-base percentage (.342) is encouraging, but he hasn’t offered much slug.

Giancarlo Stanton

C-

No one is more frustrated at his repeated injury absences than Stanton, and he is now going on three months since he last played due to multiple right calf strains.

Jake Bird

D+

If the Yankees can improve their bullpen at the deadline like they hope, Bird may be Triple-A bound unless he can sharpen his command.

Camilo Doval

D+

The Yankees continue to believe Doval can be part of the solution, but he has hurt them in high-leverage spots on too many occasions.

Brian Cashman

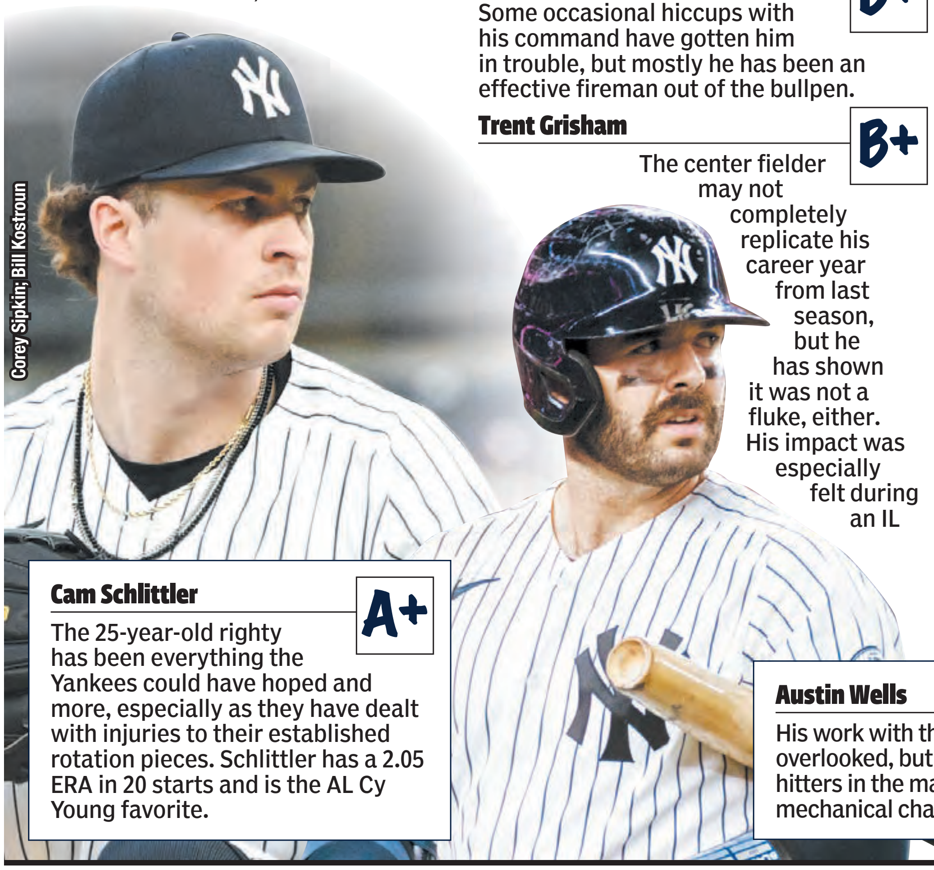
B

Running it back looked like a great decision for two-plus months, then his roster got exposed by injuries and underperformance for the better part of June. What he does at the trade deadline will be key.

Aaron Boone

B

The annual summer swoon hit yet again, one of the biggest indictments of Boone’s tenure. But players appreciate his steadiness and support, which eventually helps them right the ship.



Corey Sipkin; Bill Kostroun

Cam Schlittler

A+

The 25-year-old righty has been everything the Yankees could have hoped and more, especially as they have dealt with injuries to their established rotation pieces. Schlittler has a 2.05 ERA in 20 starts and is the AL Cy Young favorite.

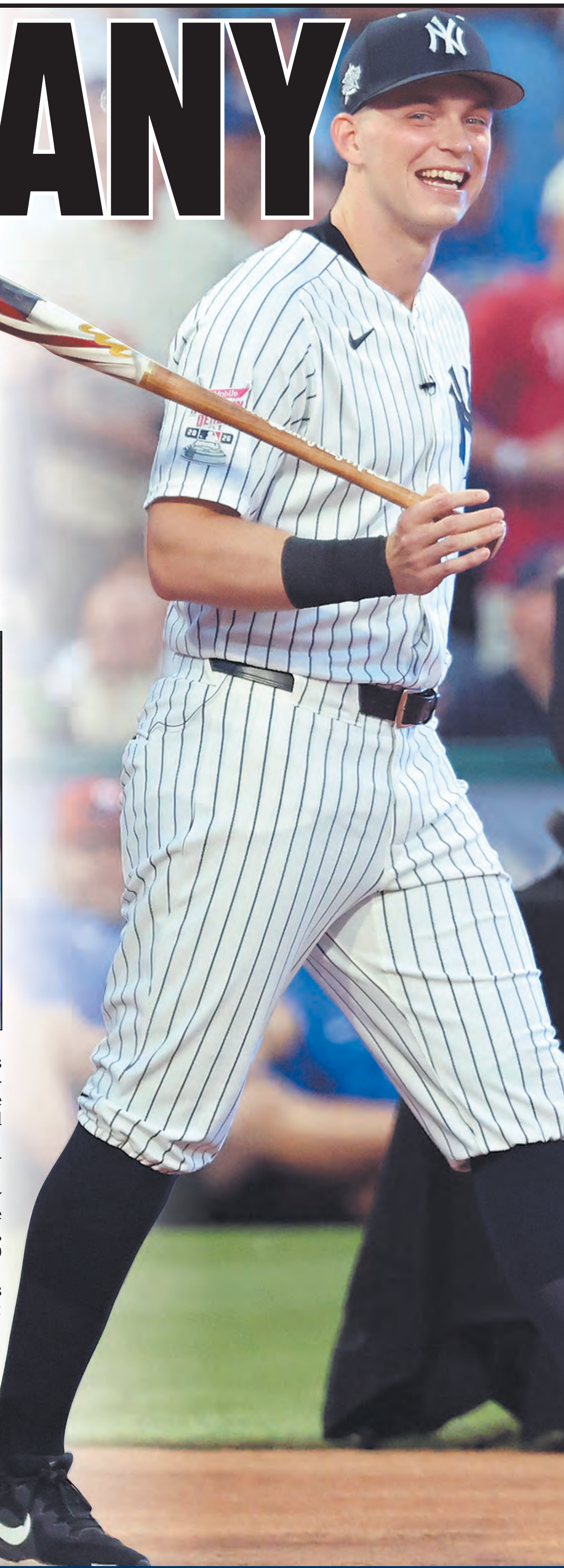
Austin Wells

F+

His work with the pitching staff can’t be overlooked, but he has been one of the worst hitters in the major leagues. Yankees are banking on recent mechanical changes paying off as they look for help.

A WIN BY ANY MEASURE

Rice loves HR Derby experience with his dad — despite early exit



By MARK W. SANCHEZ

PHILADELPHIA — Hours beforehand, Ben Rice declared his Home Run Derby experience "already a success" because he and his father, Dan, had made it. The derbies that took place in their backyard in Cohasset, Mass., were teleported into a different decade and venue, still a father pitching to his son.

The Rices won. Just not the Derby.

Ben was eliminated in Monday's first round at Citizens Bank Park, finishing with seven home runs — better than Jazz Chisholm Jr.'s three last year, but still last in this field — when he needed at least 10 for a shot at the second round.

Most participants leave shortly after falling short. Rice — in his first experience at the Midsummer Classic and breathing in every moment — stuck around for a long while, taking a seat in the infield and chatting at length with his father and Juan Soto while watching what turned out to be a thrilling finish.

In a finals matchup between hometown hero Kyle Schwarber and new Philly villain Jordan Walker, the breakout Cardinals star stole the competition and homered with his final five swings, upsetting Schwarber 12-11 and upsetting a stunned crowd for his first Derby crown.

Each home run from Walker — just like from Willson Contreras a round earlier, the Red Sox big bat suddenly hated by Phillies fans — was met with near silence by a sold-out crowd that wanted Schwarber to win his first Derby. It was not to be, Walker outslugging the Phillies slugger on enemy territory in a star turn for the first-year All-Star.

Rice watched most of it after a competition in which the Yankees revelation, taking swings against the former Brown University pitcher, came in eighth of eight. Which does not mean the pair lost.

"I think it's a can't-lose mentality for us," Ben said earlier in the day. "Going to go out there and enjoy ourselves, hopefully hit a bunch of homers, hopefully we win it.

"But if not, it was a success because my dad and I got to do it."

By that measure, it was successful. An entertaining, if brief, night for Rice began with his introduction, during which he was showered with boos by a crowd that jeered every non-Phillie but reserved its loudest jeers for the Yankee.

"The boos were crazy," said Rice, who broke into a smile as they rained down. "It was so cool. I always like the saying, 'They don't boo nobodies.' "

After strong early performances from Contreras and Walker especially, Rice stepped up needing eight home runs on 20 swings to at least have a shot. He never got going, was jumpy and ahead of many of his father's pitches. One would-be home run down the right field line hooked foul.

He did not account for the adrenaline rush.

"I didn't realize how out front my first swings were going to be," Rice said with a smile. "I was in the cage, and I was like, 'I'm going to hit 20 home runs. I'm on fire now.'

"And then I took my first one. I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm going so fast right now.' "

After a final swing that did not clear the fence, Ben walked to his father and gave him a hug. A slugger became a son again.

The duo had a great time. Would they do it again?

"We'll see," Rice said. "We'll think about it. If I ever got the chance, I definitely would consider it."

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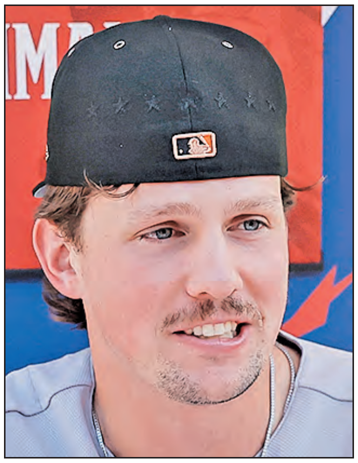
Montefiore Einstein *Official Hospital of the New York Yankees*

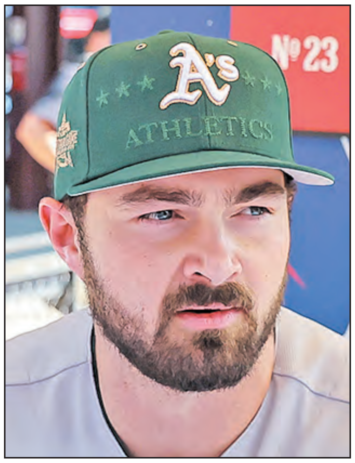
LIVING A DREAM: Ben Rice soaks in the moment — and the boos — as he is introduced before the Home Run Derby. Rice took pitches from his dad, Dan, but bowed out in the first round. The Cardinals' Jordan Walker (above) ended up winning the title.

N.Y. Post: Charles Wenzelberg; AP; Getty Images

HUNTER GOODMAN



ADLEY RUTSCHMAN



SHEA LANGELIERS

All-Star trio could fix Yanks' backstop woes

By MARK W. SANCHEZ

PHILADELPHIA — It is possible the Yankees opt for a sensible trade-deadline upgrade at catcher and swing a trade for a solid hitter such as Ryan Jeffers, who is a righty with a capable bat (which fills a need) and has a history with catching coordinator Tanner Swanson (which helps). Jeffers probably will be attainable because he is in his walk year for the hovering-around-.500 Twins and is an injury concern anyway, recovering from hamate surgery.

They could swing for the fences, though.

On display this week at Citizens Bank Park will be three All-Star catchers who are playing with teams that may authorize sell-offs. All would demand enormous returns, and all would represent enormous upgrades from the offensive struggles of Austin Wells, J.C. Escarra and Ali Sánchez, who have combined for the second-worst OPS (.522) among catching groups in baseball.

The Yankees' biggest problem would seem solved if they opted not just for a solid upgrade but a star-level addition, such as:

Hunter Goodman, Rockies

There was a time when a player like Goodman — a young, homegrown star — would never reach the trade market because Rockies ownership got attached to the person and player. Ryan McMahon, at the height of his trade value as an All-Star in 2024, was told midseason that he was not going anywhere despite the club being a non-contender.

Those days are believed to be over, which makes a Goodman trade feasible if not likely. The Rockies are trying to modernize the organization under new president of baseball operations Paul DePodesta, though the on-field results (39-59) show how far they have to go.

Goodman, who repeatedly sidestepped trade-deadline questions because his future is "out of my control" is not asking out.

"I enjoy playing for the Rockies," Goodman said at All-Star media day Monday. "I think we're doing the right things going forward. I think we're working on the right things. And the things that we've changed are going well. And I think we've seen in the way we've played this year, it's been a lot better baseball."

The Yankees and Rockies have been frequent trade partners in the past few years (such as the McMahon and Angel Chivilli deals), but Brian Cashman would have more trouble prying away Goodman.

The Rockies can ask for a fortune for a 26-year-old who cannot be a free agent until after the 2028 season and has been an All-Star two straight years, this season posting an .863 OPS with 27 home runs in 90 games.

Adley Rutschman, Orioles

Have the Orioles — winners of four straight, now 46-51 and two games back of the final wild-card spot — done enough to convince their front office they should be buyers?

"No idea," said Rutschman, who knows the team has to remain hot to avoid the kind of fire sale that went down last year.

A former No. 1 overall pick, Rutschman is enjoying a bounce-back season (.763 OPS with eight homers in 65 games), carries a strong defensive reputation and is the type of talent who seemed to be a building block in Baltimore. But he is now 28, will be a free agent after next year, has not blossomed into quite the superstar he once looked like and plays in an organization that already has locked down catcher/first baseman Samuel Basallo for eight years and $67 million.

Rutschman said he has not talked with the front office to seek clarity about his own future.

"I've just kind of been honestly just focused on trying to win," Rutschman said. "For me, that's my job. It's the most important thing."

Shea Langeliers, A's

Consider the No. 3 hitter for the American League in Tuesday's All-Star Game a long shot given he is under contractual control for two and a half more seasons, is an established hitter who has found a new level the past two years and who this season owns an .807 OPS with 21 homers.

But don't the A's — who have locked up plenty of their young players but not Langeliers — have to see what kind of haul they can extract during a 41-55 campaign?

Langeliers acknowledged seeing the trade reports and rumors that have included his name.

"It's hard not to see," the 28-year-old said. "Obviously, we all know that during the next couple weeks or whatever, it's going to be upon us. At the end of the day, you understand that it's a business as well."

It would not be a surprise for standout players on a losing franchise that is playing home games in a minor league ballpark to be open to trades to a contender.

Would Langeliers?

"If that's how it goes, that's how it goes," he said. "But obviously, I want to be an Athletic. I love the organization."

msanchez@nypost.com

All-Star Game

Tuesday, 8 p.m. | TV: Fox | Radio: WHSQ (880 AM)
Where: Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia

STARTING LINEUPS

American League		National League	
1. Mike Trout Angels	CF	**1. Kyle Schwarber** Phillies	DH
2. Yordan Alvarez Astros	DH	**2. Juan Soto** Mets	LF
3. Shea Langeliers Athletics	C	**3. Freddie Freeman** Dodgers	1B
4. Junior Caminero Rays	3B	**4. CJ Abrams** Nationals	SS
5. Bobby Witt Jr. Royals	SS	**5. Max Muncy** Dodgers	3B
6. Cody Bellinger Yankees	RF	**6. Ozzie Albies** Braves	2B
7. Ben Rice Yankees	1B	**7. Brandon Marsh** Phillies	RF
8. Riley Greene Tigers	LF	**8. Andy Pages** Dodgers	CF
9. Ernie Clement Blue Jays	2B	**9. Drake Baldwin** Braves	C
Dylan Cease Blue Jays	SP	**Cristopher Sánchez** Phillies	SP

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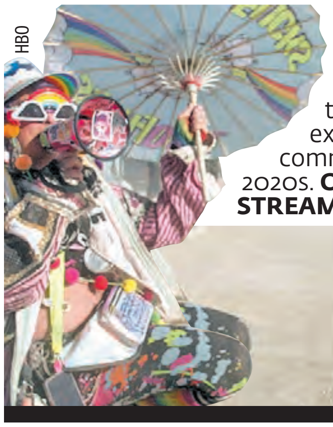

HBO

STREAM IT OR SKIP IT

"The Man Will Burn" (HBO Max) gives an effective overview of Burning Man, a festival that's misunderstood by many, while examining how its spirit of creativity and community struggles against the reality of the 2020s. **OUR CALL: STREAM IT**

WHAT TO WATCH

Hello, bonjour, hi! A new spin-off of **"Canada's Drag Race,"** titled **"Canada's Drag Race All Stars"** (WOW Presents Plus), is welcoming nine "true north, strong and fierce" queens back into the the werk room. The season marks a first for the international "Drag Race" franchise: the judging panel will be comprised entirely of drag queens —Canadian drag queens, to be exact.

For more on your favorite TV and films, visit decider.com

DECIDER

WHAT TO WATCH. WHEREVER YOU WATCH

Disney

THE PERFECT PARTNER

Host Robert Irwin says 'Dancing with the Stars: The Next Pro' contestants must be more than 'the best dancer'

Above: Robert Irwin. Below left: Bindi, Robert, and Terri Irwin. Below: Robert Irwin and Witney Carson on "Dancing with the Stars."

By KAREN KEMMERLE

Robert Irwin is embracing his new home on the dance floor! After his big win with Witney Carson on **"Dancing with The Stars"** Season 34, Irwin can't seem to shake off those boogie shoes. When the wildlife conservationist was offered the opportunity to host **"Dancing with The Stars: The Next Pro,"** he naturally "jumped" at the chance. "It was a 'yes' for me, and then I found out details," remembered Irwin. The new reality TV competition series follows 12 extraordinary dancers of all ages as they compete in an intense audition process to win the coveted spot as a pro dancer on "DWTS" Season 35.

When asked if more seasoned contestants have an edge over the younger ones, Irwin was quick to assure fans that age is not necessarily an advantage on "The Next Pro." "Obviously, experience is always important, but at the end of the day, the next pro doesn't just have to be the best dancer," explained Irwin. "They have to be the best teacher, choreographer, storyteller, and therapist. They have to be able to do everything for their partner."

Luckily, these dancers will be judged by the best duo in the business: **"Strictly Come Dancing"** head judge/ "Queen of Latin" Shirley Ballas and her son, three-time "DWTS" winner Mark Ballas. "I don't know how Mark and Shirley narrowed down the contestants each episode for elimination," said Irwin. "They agree on a lot and they disagree on a lot. Their connection and warmth really ground the show." Irwin was also quick to note that a different "DWTS" pro will join the Ballases at the judges' table for each episode, including "DWTS" legend Derek Hough and Irwin's dance partner, Carson.

DECIDER: "Dancing with the Stars" fans have been clamoring for a series like "The Next Pro" for a long time. What was your initial reaction when you got the call to be the host?

ROBERT IRWIN: It was a "yes" for me, and then I found out details [laughs]. I was coming off of this incredible journey on "Dancing with the Stars," which was life-changing and beautiful and unforgettable. I jumped at the opportunity to stay within that "Dancing With the Stars" family that I had created.

In the trailer, it looks like you hit the dance floor with this incredible group. Can you confirm or deny?

Can I confirm? [Turns to ABC team who nod in approval]. Yes, I can confirm! I am dancing a bit in "The Next Pro." I'm doing far more than just hosting. Towards the end of the competition, we've got a full-out choreographed number where I reunite with Witney for the first time since winning "DWTS."

It was all very exciting for me. While we were filming the season, I was asking the team when I could dance again. "How about in this episode? What about in this episode?" They're like, "Just wait for the finale, Robert." [Laughs]. Being on "DWTS" was such a privilege. I had a three-month crash course to learn a whole new skill from the ground up. It became so ingrained in me. Now all I want to do is dance!

The contestants' ages range from 20 to 35. Do you think the more experienced dancers have the advantage or is there something to be said about the aspiring pros who are young and hungry?

Oh, not necessarily. Obviously, experience is always important, but at the end of the day, the next pro doesn't just have to be the best dancer. They have to be the best teacher, choreographer, storyteller, and therapist, too. They have to be everything for their partner. That's what we're looking for. It doesn't matter where you're from, or what your dance background is, or how old you are. It doesn't matter if you've been in the troupe on "Dancing with the Stars" itself. It is all about what you can give, what you are willing to do, and whether you are willing to put it all on the line to be a pro.

We're about to see that all 12 of these contestants are more than willing to do that. That's what makes this so hard. The worst job on "The Next Pro" is being a judge. I don't know how Mark and Shirley narrowed down the contestants each episode for elimination. We were watching some of the most talented dancers on Earth perform each week. Judging is a very hard job, but it's also a great job [laughs]. You can tell how much they love it.

Lions Gate

TRENDING NOW

"Michael" has just accomplished another huge milestone! The biopic about Michael Jackson has just crossed $1 billion worldwide at the box office. **Jaafar Jackson** (left) stars as the legendary King of Pop in the film, which is the first biopic to hit this box office feat.

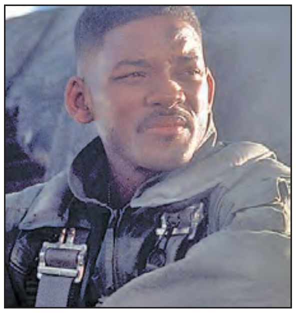
WHAT'S NEW

ON DISCOVERY
"Homestead Rescue: Intervention," a new series.

ON PARAMOUNT+
"The Real Wolf of Wall Street," a three-part docuseries (left).

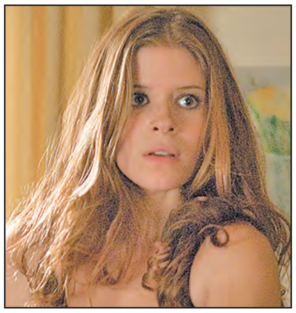
Best Bets

What's on Tonight



ADVENTURE

Independence Day: 4 p.m. on FX. Will Smith, Bill Pullman. A mothership launches a fleet of alien spacecraft, impervious to nuclear blasts.



THRILLER

Shooter: 9:50 p.m. on PARSHO. Mark Wahlberg, Michael Peña. An expert marksman is framed for the assassination of the US President.

ACTION

The Equalizer: 10:43 p.m. on HBO. Denzel Washington, Marton Csokas. A man cannot stand idly by when he meets a girl under the control of gangsters.

Tuesday July 14, 2026

SP = Spectrum, C = Cablevision, F = FiOS Movies 🟥 Sports 🟩 New 🟨

Evening	SP	C	F	6:30pm	7:00pm	7:30pm	8:00pm	8:30pm	9:00pm	9:30pm	10:00pm	10:30pm	11:00pm	11:30pm
2 WCBS	2	2	2	CBS Evening News	Inside Edition	Entertainment Tonight	NCIS: God Only Knows (R)		NCIS: Origins: Rule 13 (R)		NCIS: Sydney: Death Card (R)		CBS News 11pm	(11:35) Comics
4 WNBC	4	4	4	NBC Nightly News	News 4 New York at 7	Access Hollywood	America's Got Talent: Auditions 6: Dancing dads, a death-defying aerialist and a series of original songs.				Password	Password	News 4 New York at 11	(11:35) Tonight Show
5 WNYW	5	5	5	MLB on FOX Pregame Live.			2026 MLB All-Star Game: from Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia. Live.						The 10 O'Clock News	
7 WABC	7	7	7	ABC World News	Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune (R)	RJ Decker: The Needle and the Damage Done (R)		Will Trent: Nice to Meet You, Malcolm (R)		Will Trent: You're Not That Person Anymore (R)		News	(11:35) Kimmel Live
9 WWOR	9	9	9	(6:00) 6 O'Clock News	Family Feud (R)	Family Feud (R)	The News on My 9		Chicago P.D.: The Thing About Heroes		Family Feud (R)	Family Feud (R)	Chicago P.D.: Reform	
11 WPIX	11	11	11	(6:00) PIX11 News at 6	Seinfeld: Pledge Drive	The Big Bang Theory	WWE NXT Live.				PIX11 News at Ten		New York Nightcap	Seinfeld: The Truth
13 WNET	13	13	13	BBC News America	The PBS News Hour		Finding Your Roots: Out of the Past (R)		Once Upon a Time in Space: America First		Diana's Decades: 1980s		Amanpour and Company	
21 WLIW	21	21	21	(6:00) News	My Life	(7:45) Father Brown		Murder Mysteries		Silent Witness		Canal	BBC News	The Day
25 WNYE	25	22	25	The Chavis	County	Voces NYC	Walkin NYC	Discovery	Never Knew	Future	New York	Secrets NY	Lessons of Basketball	
31 WPXN	31	3	531	(6:00) Fire	Chicago Fire: Santa Bites		Chicago Fire		Chicago Fire		Chicago Fire: Three Bells		Chicago Fire	
41 WXTV	41	6	41	N Univisi	La rosa de Guadalupe		Tan Cerca de Ti, Nace el		Guardián de mi Vida		Corazon de Oro		Noticias	N Univisio
47 WNJU	47	16	12	Noticias	Operación Triunfo				El Señor de los Cielos		Lejos de Ti: Un retorno		Noticiero	Noticias
55 WLNY	55	10	10	Perfect (R)	Last Man	Last Man	News 8pm		48 Hours		Judge Judy	Judge Judy	Neighbor.	Neighbor.
A&E	46	46	181	Neighbor	Neighbor	Neighbor	Neighbor	Neighbor	Neighbor	Neighbor	Squatters	Squatters	Squatters	Squatters
AMC	54	43	231	Die Hard R	The Beekeeper (2024, Action) Jason Statham. R					Wrath of Man (2021, Thriller) Jason Statham. R ★★★				
BBCAM	71	101	189	(6:00) Days of Thunder (1990, Drama) Tom Cruise.				Road House (1989, Action) Patrick Swayze. R ★★★					Law & Order: DWB	
BET	37	54	270	(6:00) Feud	Celebrity Family Feud		Celebrity Family Feud		Ms. Pat	Comic View	Lot Patrol	Martin	Martin	Martin
BRAVO	18	44	185	In City (R)	In The City: In Crossfire		In The City: Cider and Squabbles			Married at First Sight			(11:01) Real Housewives	
CNBC	15	24	102	Money	Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank		Shark Tank	
CNN	78	25	100	(6:00) Lead	Erin Burnett OutFront		Anderson Cooper 360°		The Source with Kaitlan		CNN NewsNight		Laura Coates Live	
COMEDY	45	50	190	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Family Guy	Daily Show	Family Guy
DISC	66	27	120	Homestead	Homestead Rescue (R)		Homestead Rescue: Intervention: Alaska Winter				Homestead Rescue: Misery on Miracle Mountain (R)			
DISNEY	49	31	250	The Incredibles (2004) Craig T. Nelson.			Descendants 3 (2019, Family) Dove Cameron. NR				Phineas	Kiff	Miraculous	Miraculous
E!	24	51	196	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)	Mother (R)
ESPN	28	36	70	Sports	NBA Summer League Basketball: Teams TBA Live.				NBA Summer League Basketball: Teams TBA Live.				SportsCenter	
ESPN2	29	35	74	Baseball	Athletes Unlimited Softball: Spark VS. Volts Live.				ESPN FC		NFL Live		30 for 30: The ‘85 Bears	
FBN	43	106	117	Bottom	Kudlow (R)		To Be Announced		To Be Announced		To Be Announced		To Be Announced	
FNC	44	26	118	Spc. Rpt.	The Ingraham Angle		Jesse Watters Primetime		Hannity		Gutfeld!		Fox News @ Night	
FOOD	50	97	164	Chopped	Chopped: Hawaiian		Beat Bobby	Beat Bobby	Beat Bobby	Beat Bobby	Beat Bobby	Beat Bobby	Beat Bobby	Beat Bobby
FREE	38	49	199	Toy Story 3 (2010, Comedy) Tom Hanks. G ★★★★					(8:55) Toy Story 4 (2019, Family) Tom Hanks. G ★★★				The 700 Club (R)	
FS1	400	99	83	Harvick's	2026 FIFA World Cup Taped.				2026 FIFA World Cup: Argentina at Switzerland.				2026 FIFA World Cup	
FX	10	40	53	Day (1996)	Independence Day: Resurgence (2016, Action) Liam Hemsworth.					The A-Team (2010, Action) Liam Neeson. PG-13 ★★★				
HALL		191	240	Our Holiday Story (2024) Nikki Deloach.			The Most Wonderful Time of the Year (2008) NR ★★★				Golden	Golden	Golden	Golden
HGTV	64	98	165	Love It	Love It or List It		Love It or List It		Castle Impossible		Hunters	Australia	Australia	Hunters
HIST	40	47	128	The Secret	The Secret: High Voltage		The Secret: Rocket Men		The Secret of Skinwalker		The Secret	(10:32) Proof Is Out		Proof Out
ID	23	171	123	People	People Magazine		People Magazine		People: The University of Cosmic Intelligence Cult				People Magazine	
LIFE	62	45	140	Castle	Castle: Sucker Punch		Castle: The Third Man		Castle: Suicide Squeeze		(10:03) Castle: Tick, Tick		(11:03) Castle: Third Man	
MeTV	33	33	3	M*A*S*H	M*A*S*H	M*A*S*H	Andy	Andy	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Golden	Golden	Burnett	P. Mason
MSG	27	87	78	(5:00) NHL	NHL Hockey				Club 30		NHL Hockey			
MSG Plus	48	88	80	High Stake	PokerGo High Stakes		UFA		United Fight Alliance		NHL Hockey Replay.			
MSNOW	14	23	103	Ari Melber	The Weeknight		All in with Chris Hayes		The Briefing Jen Psaki		Lawrence O'Donnell		The 11th Hour with Ali	
MTV	20	53	210	Bang	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office	The Office
NATGEO	65	162	121	Sharks (R)	Supersized Sharks (R)		Cannibal Sharks (R)		Shark Eat Shark (R)		Biggest Sharks (R)		Sharks Gone (R)	
NICK	6	121	252	SpongeBob	Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang
OWN	173	180	145	Deadline	Deadline: Tamron Hall		Deadline: Tamron Hall		Deadline: Tamron Hall		20/20 on OWN		20/20 on OWN	
PARMT	36	56	54	(6:00) Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002, Fantasy) Daniel Radcliffe.						(9:45) Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004, Fantasy) PG				
SNY	26	60	77	Yeah ...	Yeah ...	Yeah ...	Mets Specials		Cyn Heroes	Yeah ...	Yeah ...	Yeah ...	Sports	Sports
SYFY	17	48	180	Renfield (2023, Horror) Nicholas Hoult.			The Exorcist: Believer (2023, Horror) Leslie Odom Jr. R ★★					Renfield (2023, Horror) Nicholas Hoult.		
TBS	8	39	52	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang	Bang	The Office	The Office
TCM	82	41	230	(6:00) That's Entertainment! III (1994) G			Little Fugitive (1953) Richie Andrusco.			Park Row (1952, Drama) Gene Evans.			The Connection (1962)	
TLC	52	28	139	Jay & Pam	Baylen Out Loud (R)		Baylen Out Loud		Baylen Out Loud		Jay & Pamela		(11:01) Little Singles (R)	
TNT	3	37	51	(6:00) Aquaman (2018, Action) Jason Momoa, Amber Heard. ★★★					The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001, Fantasy) Elijah Wood.					
TVLAND	85	34	241	(6:24) Andy	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	(9:20) Loves Raymond		Loves Ray.	Loves Ray.	Queens	Queens
USA	16	38	50	(6:00) SVU	Law & Order: SVU		Law & Order: SVU		Law & Order: SVU		Law & Order: SVU		Law & Order: SVU	
VH1	19	52	217	Wife/Kids	Wife/Kids	Wife/Kids	Basketball Wives (R)		Basketball Wives (R)		Basketball Wives (R)		Basketball Wives (R)	
WE	59	42	149	Minds	Criminal Minds		Criminal Minds: Normal		Criminal Minds		Criminal Minds: Bloodline		Criminal Minds	
YES	53	89	76	(6:00) NBA Summer League Live.			Sportico	Homegrown	Homegrown	Homegrown	Homegrown	Homegrown	BK Show	BKFCrewind
HBO	511	301	400	(5:43) Lee Cronin's The Mummy (2026)			The Man Will Burn (R)		House of the Dragon (R)		Life Larry	(10:43) The Equalizer (2014, Action) ★★★		
MAX	531	371	420	Lincoln ★★½	Extraction (2015, Thriller) Kellan Lutz. ★½			(8:38) Green Zone (2010, Action) Matt Damon. R ★★★				(10:33) Final Destination (2000, Horror)		
MGM Plus	595		395	(5:55) Emma (1996, Romance) PG ★★★			Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (2024, Action) Tika Sumpter.				Anchorman: Ron Burgundy (2004) ★★★			Anchorman
PARSHO	551	321	365	(5:35) Clear and Present Danger (1994)			Deepwater Horizon (2016) PG-13 ★★★			(9:50) Shooter (2007, Thriller) Mark Wahlberg, Michael Peña. R ★★★				

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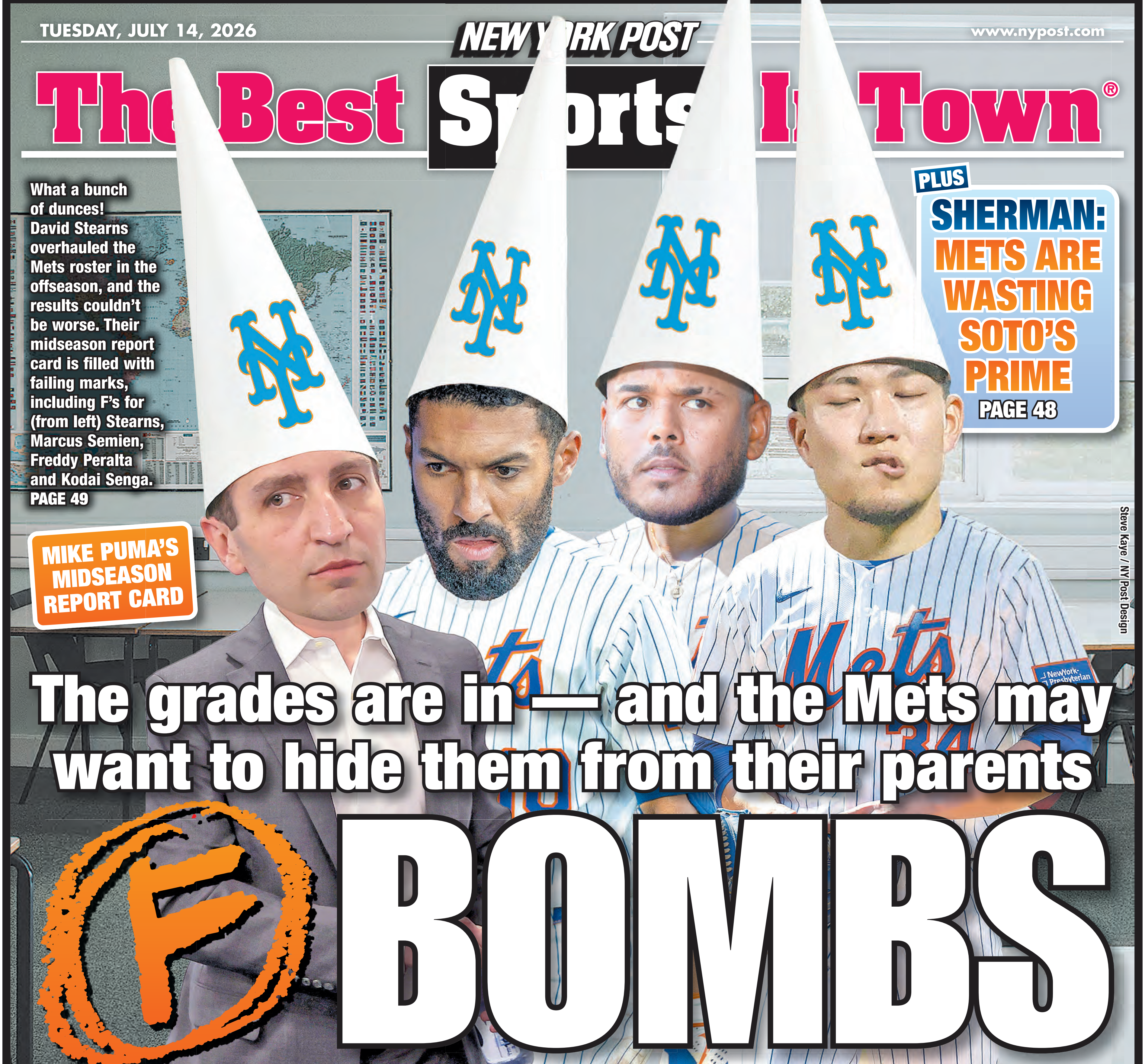

What a bunch of dunces! David Stearns overhauled the Mets roster in the offseason, and the results couldn't be worse. Their midseason report card is filled with failing marks, including F's for (from left) Stearns, Marcus Semien, Freddy Peralta and Kodai Senga. PAGE 49

MIKE PUMA'S MIDSEASON REPORT CARD

PLUS

SHERMAN: METS ARE WASTING SOTO'S PRIME

PAGE 48

Steve Kaye / NY Post Design

The grades are in — and the Mets may want to hide them from their parents

BOMBS

WHY EWING IS LEAVING KNICKS

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